

The Star Beagle Adventures Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

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The Star Beagle Adventures Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

by [LordRobertBruceScott](#)

Summary

Out of control and blind as a bat...

Notes

Throughout this episode, snippets of lyrics are quoted. These are from the third movement of the song, "Close to the Edge part III - I Get Up, I Get Down" by Jon Anderson and Steve Howe. The song first appeared as track 1 on Close to the Edge, the fifth album by the progressive rock band, YES, 1972, Atlantic Records.

SBA Episode 14, Scene 1: The Blame

Chapter Summary

You could clearly see the lady sadly looking...
Saying that she'd take the blame...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 1: The Blame

You could clearly see the lady sadly looking...

Saying that she'd take the blame...

14.1

The Blame

“Bill, send a distress signal to the Commodore!”

Master Chief Bill Waller leapt up from the now useless helm and quickly moved to the adjacent communications station, there quickly programming the U.S.S. Escort’s communication system. “Distress signal away,” he reported without looking back. “Impact imminent!”

Waller’s announcement was immediately followed by a harsh grinding sound like a giant drill. He turned and looked in horror as the tip of the rocky shell of the creature his captain had dubbed a “lepreshroom” punched down through the ceiling at the back of the bridge, then quickly continued downward, directly toward Escort’s warp core.

Neither Carter nor Waller had any understanding of why they were still alive as the back of the bridge was replaced by a growing wall of rock that swiftly swelled to fill the bridge.

“Rhonda!!!” Waller cried as the rock passed through his captain’s body, then: “Crap!!!” as the rock passed seamlessly through his own body, followed by a slimy, mushy grayness that he could almost feel as a wave of nausea caused him to retch. He fell out of his chair to his knees and vomited into the mushy, slimy grayness, then it, too, passed through him, leaving some traces of his own vomit on his face and uniform, but none on the floor of the bridge.

Everything was dark, gray, out of focus, a little on the wavy side, and covered with a layer of slime. Waller tried to control himself, but the nausea overtook him again and another flux of vomit rushed up out of his stomach and was ejected onto the slimy, dark, gray, out of focus and somewhat wavy floor of the Escort’s bridge.

He crawled a few feet to his right to get away from the sickening, dark gray and even slimier mess that was threatening to throw him into yet another series of regurgitational spasms. He kept his head down, breathing in heaving gasps until he felt a hand on his chin.

Captain Rhonda Carter was sitting cross-legged in front of her longest serving crew-member. She gently lifted his face with a hand on his chin and cleaned his face with a soft, wet rag. After a moment she got to her feet without using her hands, then reached down and helped Master Chief Waller to his feet.

“How did... What kept you from throwing up?”

In response, Carter just pointed to another slimy pile of goo on the floor. Bill Waller nearly threw up again just looking at it.

Carter ignored him. She looked around the dark gray, slimy, and slightly out of focus bridge in wonder: "...the... fuck?"

Waller turned around and carefully made his way back to the helm station. The viewscreen was blank.

"I think we're inside the thing," Waller observed.

"Yep," Carter responded. She walked back to the dark gray, slimy, out of focus captain's throne and slowly lowered herself into it. "Ewww."

"Captain?" Waller asked.

"It's as slimy as it looks."

Waller pushed his fingers through the slime. "Helm control is still down. Communications is now down, but we're still broadcasting the distress signal." He turned back toward Captain Carter. "Captain, she told me she had the ability to control these... slimy... mushroom... things... Stephanie. She was the key to controlling these things. It's why you can hear. It's how she fixed Eva's jaw. Without her..."

Carter finished his thought without looking up: "We're out of control and blind as a bat." She looked up at him, a solemn expression on her face. Tears starting in her eyes, something that he had never seen before.

"Bill... I think I really fucked up this time..."



SBA Episode 14, Scene 2: Barely Satisfied

Chapter Summary

Two million people barely satisfy...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 2: Barely Satisfied

Two million people barely satisfy...

14.2

Barely Satisfied

“You got us into this gray, slimy mess...”

Master Chief Bill Waller gestured and looked around in some confusion at the gray slime covering every surface of the bridge. “And you’re going to have to get us out of this...” Waller tried to clean his hands on his uniform, but both were equally slimy. “Ick... So consolidate your crap.”

Captain Rhonda Carter laughed in spite of the dark, grim, slimy surroundings. She sat down again in the slimy command chair and tried the controls. Nothing. “Internal communications are down, along with, apparently, everything else.”

Waller gestured to the only display on the bridge that seemed to be working. “Everything except the distress signal.”

Carter touched her communicator pin, which emitted a standard series of beeps that somehow managed to sound slimy.

“Conference mode, ship-wide.” The pin emitted another slimy beep. “All hands, put a priority on evacuating the nacelles.”

“Captain?” It was Chief Flight Engineer Roman Hess, his voice sounding mildly slimy coming through the communicator pins. “Sir, I have two people with me in the starboard nacelle. We’re blocked by some sort of stone wall.”

“This is Zizira Gross, Captain, I have another two in the port nacelle. Our exit is also blocked.”

“Captain?” It was the voice of Ensign Hiroshi Sanchez. “I’m in the shuttlebay. There’s rock wall cutting partly into shuttles 1 and 2, but the transporters are still active. Shuttle 3 is free and clear.”

“Sanchez, beam everyone out of the nacelles, then start at the back of the boat and start beaming everyone you can find into the shuttlebay,” Carter ordered.

It was only a moment before Lieutenant Commander Zizira Gross called in.

“Captain, I am now in the shuttlebay.”

“Use two of the shuttles to evacuate all hands to the shuttlebay,” Carter ordered. “I want you to send me and Bill to the tactical launch, count to 10, then beam us to the shuttlebay if I don’t report in.”

Even the transporter lights and field seemed slimy at first. But when Carter and Waller were deposited in the tactical launch, they were treated to clean air, clean light and, far more surprisingly, clean uniforms and even clean bodies underneath their uniforms. Both veterans of Earth’s famous, premiere space service emitted heavy sighs of relief.

Carter immediately touched her communicator pin, which wasn’t slimy at all. “Zizira, we’re here. I’m going to use the transporter to fill the

launch with as many people as it can support. We'll start with people located closest to us. You work from your end and bring the rest of the crew into the shuttlebay."

"Aye, Captain. Gross out."

"I never thought breathing would feel so good," Master Chief Bill Waller observed.

"You think this launch could handle, how many, 11 people total?" Carter asked.

"Pushing it. But assuming the shuttles will pass out of the rock wall as easily as it passed into us, I'd say each shuttle could hold a dozen tops," Waller replied. "Which means if we take 11, that will be everyone."

"Start beaming people in, Bill." Carter ordered. She moved forward, activated the screens and controls of the forward station.

There were only three stations in the tactical launch, arranged in tandem. The tactical launch had three levels, the operational stations on the middle level, the primary shield generator for the ship, along with secondary pulse cannon and the forward torpedo launcher on the lowest level and a broad corridor on the top level that served as the primary docking port for the ship.

Waller took the rear station, which was rear-facing, and started beaming crew members in. Two were, apparently, unconscious.

Captain Carter got up and opened a hatch that led to the top level. "Bill, Seprek and me on this level, everyone else up there," she ordered. "Ah, Kara, please check on Eva and Dion," she said as Medical Technician Kara Garrity was beamed in.

"The bio filters are filtering out, on average, about 6 pounds of fungal matter from each individual," Waller observed, continuing to work.

"Eva is alive and stable," Garrity reported. "Flight Engineer Dion Draper is dead. Asphyxiation, apparently."

"Move him to the lower level," Carter ordered. She pointed to a hatch.

"I'll do it," said Warrant Officer Seprek Harrison, who had been the second person Waller had beamed in.

"When you're done with that, take the helm," Carter ordered.

"I just checked counts with Zizira," Bill Waller reported quietly as the last of the crew made their way up through the forward hatch to the top level. "All hands accounted for. Nine casualties, including Eva. Six fatalities, all, apparently, asphyxiation..."

"Do your best with life support, Bill," Carter replied. "Even with 10 sets of lungs in here instead of 11, we're going to go through air fast."

SBA Episode 14, Scene 3: Regrets

Chapter Summary

Two hundred women watch one woman cry, too late...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 3: Regrets

Two hundred women watch one woman cry, too late...

14.3 Regrets

Warrant Officer Seprek Harrison sat quietly at the helm of the tactical launch, reviewing all of the sensor readings that were available to him. He could clearly hear Captain Rhonda Carter and Master Chief Bill Waller having a quiet argument at the rear of the tactical launch.

The corpse of Flight Engineer Dion Draper had been placed in what was now the airless void of the tactical deck. This deck contained the primary deflector array for the U.S.S. Escort, along with secondary pulse phasers. The latter were rarely used as they shared a power array with the deflector. But when the tactical launch was deployed (which would only be done in an emergency), these provided some protection for the small space craft.

The use of a separate warp power core for the deflector grid was part of what made these small destroyers so tough in battle. They could also transform this small portion of the ship into a high speed shuttle... Or a really powerful warhead.

“Okay, okay,” Waller was saying, very quietly. “Ensign John Sevork, Ensign Ronaldo Carmen, Chief Tactical Specialist Juan Rosa, Tactical Specialist Bong Diep Cao, Flight Engineer Dion Draper, Transporter Engineer Darius Yahya...” Waller breathed a heavy sigh. “Flight Specialist Maya Davi.”

“Fuck,” Carter said softly, then: “It’s been a long time since I lost that many people. And I’m very far from certain that I didn’t bring it on us...”

Waller’s voice was even quieter. “I don’t care about how you got us into this, Rhonda. Not now. All I care about is how you’re going to get us out of this!”

Harrison had had enough of this argument.

“If it helps, Captain,” he said in a normal voice from the front of the control deck. “You might recall what you said at the end of your last court-martial.”

“My only court-martial, Seprek,” Carter retorted irritably. “And you weren’t there.”

“But I’ve heard the story so many times,” Seprek Harrison replied.

Carter turned and scrutinized the martial arts instructor turned jack of all trades. “Vulcans only use sarcasm as a teaching tool.”

“Just because I can’t teach you anything about fighting doesn’t mean I don’t have anything to teach you,” Harrison replied.

“He’s right, you know,” said Waller. “Say it.”

Carter turned and looked at the veteran NCO. “Are you...”

Waller cut her off. “Just say it already so we can move on.”

The captain shook her head, sighed. “At the end of the day, I did what I thought was needed to keep my people safe and the remaining prisoners alive.”

“And you believe that today just as much as you did when you said it,” Waller observed.

“I was putting on a brave face,” Carter retorted. “I got had by some clever secret agents with agendas that I never figured out.”

“And the same thing happened just a few minutes ago. You got had by a bizarre space shrimp and its pet mushroom and we still haven’t figured out their agenda,” Waller observed. “So what do we do now? Launch?”

“We stay put right here.”

“Why?” asked Waller.

“This lepreshroom shut down everything on the ship,” Carter replied. “It’s ignoring us because we’re not important to it. Yet...”

“Not everything,” Waller observed. “The distress beacon.”

“Exactly,” said Carter. “I had pre-programmed our distress signal to follow Commodore Yui’s beacon to the out door.”

“That’s some fairly involved math,” Harrison observed.

Carter tapped the fourth pip on her collar. “I can do math. Or rather, I can instruct the computer how to do the correct math. So why didn’t Rocky shut that distress call down? He shut everything else down...”

“So he can follow it out of the Jar Galaxy to the door that leads us back into the Milky Way,” Waller said, appreciatively.

“But we don’t know where in the Milky Way that door will land us,” Harrison objected.

“We’re a billion light years or more from home,” Carter replied. “If the doorway takes us to the Gamma Quadrant of the Milky Way, we’re still a lot closer to home. I’ll take 70 thousand light years away over a billion light years away any day. But think about this...”

Harrison and Waller both turned to watch Captain Carter as she walked from the back of the control deck to the command chair in the center.

“Those doors from this galaxy to our own wouldn’t be much use to those holy landers unless they were reasonably close together on the Milky Way side.” The blue-haired captain took her seat in the command chair.

“So we sit. And we wait...”

“And maybe Rocky will take us home.”

SBA Episode 14, Scene 4: The Eyes of Honesty

Chapter Summary

The eyes of honesty can achieve...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 4: Eyes of Honesty

The eyes of honesty can achieve...

14.4

Eyes of Honesty

"I don't think your heart has taken any permanent damage, but we really need to get your blood pressure down and keep it down."

Chief Medical Technician Kara Garrity had looked after the rest of the crew aboard the U.S.S. Escort's tactical launch. It was only after reporting that all were safe and that Eva Mendez was not only conscious, but her jaw was, miraculously, healed, that Captain Rhonda Carter had allowed her own checkup.

"Anything I don't know?" Carter asked.

"You need a vacation," Garrity replied.

"I need to retire," Carter retorted. "Bill, where are we going to retire to?"

"I hear Bajor's nice," Master Chief Bill Waller observed.

"It's a deal," Carter replied. "We get back home, hang up our pips, I'll get us each a nice, cute bajoran girl and a place big enough for two families."

"Have the two of you always planned to retire together?" Garrity asked.

"After all these years?" Waller responded. "She wouldn't last 10 minutes without me."

"After all these years, I wouldn't want to try," Carter agreed. "Besides, after all he's been through, Bill deserves a really cute wife and he's never going to get one without my help. Not with that mug." She made an amused noise, then sighed heavily as Garrity applied the hyposyringe to her neck and administered a drug. It didn't take long for her skin to return to a more normal color. "Ohh... That's so much better."

"Kapclonigen is for emergency use only," said Garrity. "You already have way too much of it in your system, but there just isn't any other choice. It's by far the lesser of two evils. Given the amount in your system, you will need medical attention as soon as possible to prevent further damage to your heart."

"I'll check in with Doctor Moorman when we get back to the task force," said Carter.

Garrity took a deep breath, turned to look first at warrant Officer Seprek Harrison at the helm station in the front, then at Bill Waller at the ops station in the rear. Harrison raised an eyebrow. Waller raised both.

"Are you so certain we will get back to the task force, Captain?" Garrity asked, quietly.

“As long as, to borrow a phrase from Bill, we keep our crap consolidated,” Carter quipped. “The Commodore isn’t going to abandon us. She will be nearby when we get back. And Rocky will take us home as long as we don’t give him any reason to shake us off. Now, if you would, get back up there and spread the word with the crew. We are going to make it home. But for that to happen, I’ve got to do a few things.”

“Aye sir,” Garrity said. There was just a little more hope in her voice than earlier. She exchanged glances with Harrison and Waller again before clambering back up the hatch to the corridor level to join the other six crew members who were on that level. Waller winked at her.

“I see you found your brave face,” Bill Waller remarked after Garrity closed the hatch.

“Every captain has to keep a good supply of them,” Carter replied. “You’re the only one I allow to see me without that makeup. Can you raise Zizira?”

Waller turned back to his console. “I have her, sir. Forward screen.”

The ship’s bolian first officer, Lt. Cmdr. Zizira Gross, was displayed on the main viewscreen of the U.S.S. Escort’s tactical launch. She was, herself, seated at the ops station of Shuttle #1. The elderly klingon general, Krank, was seated next to her at the pilot’s station.

“We have 28 survivors on our side and three available shuttles, I have 10 assigned to Shuttle 3. The remainder are divided between Shuttles 1 and 2, along with the remains of 5... Given how small these shuttles are, we’re pretty much crammed cheek to jowl, so to speak.” The blue first officer paused. “So what is the plan, Captain? Do we launch?”

“We stay put,” Carter responded. “So as long as the shuttlebay is pressurized, you can let people out of those shoeboxes. Have a boarding plan that will get them all back in over the space of a few seconds.”

“What are you thinking?” General Krank asked.

Carter took a breath. “We need to be important enough to this big, rock-encrusted mushroom that it won’t let us die, but at the same time not enough of a threat that it will seek to wipe us out. Listen carefully...”

SBA Episode 14, Scene 5: Do We Deceive?

Chapter Summary

How many millions do we deceive, each day?



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 5: Do We Deceive?

How many millions do we deceive, each day?

14.5

Do We Deceive?

“That is a very devious plan. Not something I would have expected from you,” General Krank observed. “I like it.”

Krank and Lt. Cmdr. Zizira Gross were seated in the front of the U.S.S. Escort’s Shuttle 1. Lieutenant Christian Singleterry was observing from the helm of Shuttle 2 and Ensign Hiroshi Sanchez was watching on the forward viewscreen of Shuttle 3.

Captain Carter was the focal point on each of the viewscreens. She tapped the fourth pip on her collar. “It seems I have to keep reminding people that this thing didn’t just grow here... Okay, Zizira, before you power down your transporters, you might as well send the fatalities to me. We have more room for them. They’ll get a radiation bath in the weapons hold below once we engage shields, but that won’t harm them at this point. Any questions?”

Gross waited to give Sanchez and Singleterry the opportunity to ask a question, then seeing none, she replied, “Apparently not, Captain. I will arrange the beam over with Seprek.”

“Delegate it to a junior officer on your end, Lieutenant Commander. I will have Seprek do the same. Give our people work to do. Carter out.”

Captain Carter’s image faded from the viewscreens of the three shuttles.

Lt. Cmdr. Zizira Gross turned toward General Krank “Do you think her plan will work?”

“It is both shrewd and pragmatic,” Krank responded. “Not that either are any guarantee of success. However, given the situation, it is our best option. If we were to launch, we might be left behind with insufficient resources to return home and insufficient weaponry to protect ourselves against other hostiles. And we would be easy prey for, as Rhonda named it, Rocky.”

Krank got up out of his chair. The interior of the shuttle was hardly big enough for him alone. There was only seating for 6 and there were 9 present on the shuttle. The elderly general pointed to one of the crew members at random. “You! Come up with a plan to get everyone back onboard this shuttle within 15 seconds. Make sure everyone understands it and understands their role in it.”

“Me?” the startled transporter engineer responded, only to be met with a large, scowling klingon in his face.

“DO YOU REFUSE?”

“N, n, n, no sir...”

“The Lieutenant Commander and I have business with the other shuttles and the rest of the crew. No one else sets foot off this shuttle until this one...” Krank pointed at the random and now completely terrified transporter engineer... “Until this one is thoroughly satisfied that he can get all of you back onto this shuttle in 15 seconds. There WILL be a drill!”

The elderly klingon general whirled and stepped off the shuttle, followed by a very amused bolian first officer trying desperately to look stern and to not burst into laughter.

“You just about gave Engineer Thorpe a heart attack,” Gross whispered.

“I gave him an opportunity to develop some leadership and the others good reason to support him,” Krank replied.

“A good way to take their minds off our current predicament,” Gross observed.

“We will need a lot more of those,” Krank rejoined. “For now, the captain’s order is paramount.” He gestured to the other two shuttles.

Shuttle 1, which they had just exited, was on the starboard upper platform. Shuttle 2 was on the upper port side platform. Shuttle 3 was parked directly on the shuttlebay doors. Which was a violation of safety protocols, but was also the only way to cram 3 shuttles into the shuttlebay.

Lt. Christian Singleterry was just exiting Shuttle 2 with other crew members following her. Shuttle 3 remained sealed with crew aboard under the command of Ensign Hiroshi Sanchez.

“I’ll take Shuttle 3,” said Gross. “You take Shuttle 2...”

Lt. Cmdr. Zizira Gross grasped a quick access pole and slid down to the bay door level.

General Krank strode to the aft bridge between the two upper parking platforms. “What do you think you’re doing Lieutenant Singleterry? Back on that shuttle! All of you! NOW!”

SBA Episode 14, Scene 6: Amazement

Chapter Summary

She would gladly say it amazement of her story...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 6: Amazement

She would gladly say it amazement of her story...

14.6 Amazement

The small, dark gray robot was constructed mostly of metallic plastics, which allowed its protective skin to flex smoothly around its joints. A combined sensor array and control receiver was arranged into a small dorsal fin on its back. Its rectangular head contained stereoscopic eyes, ears and nostrils of a sort, all designed to allow it to quickly locate odd sounds and smells. It also had four legs and a small tail (which both helped with balance and served as a transmitter), all this giving it somewhat the look of a dark gray, metallic pug.

The legs could be folded flush with the torso, enabling the robot to move using levitation plates, in which mode it looked more like an oddly cute metallic grouper, hence the unofficial moniker: dogfish. More people knew the robot by that name than by its official designation, the NEER Model 18, by far the most popular model of the Nakamura Enterprises Exploratory Robot series.

In the murky grayness of the U.S.S. Escort's engine room, the small robot moved with glacial slowness. It transmitted everything its slime-covered sensors could pick up. Which was mostly... slime. All over everything.

But where the mushroom that lived on the inside of a thorn of rock intersected with the Escort's warp core, there was a lot of activity. Slimy gray tendrils merged with the control panels for the warp core. Far more tendrils intersected the antimatter chamber. More snaked off along the conduits that carried the excited currents into the nacelles.

The robot followed the conduits toward the nacelles at a glacial pace. Seemingly only slightly faster than the tendrils were growing.

It wasn't just visuals that the dogfish was transmitting, it was every reading the robot was picking up with a surprisingly broad array of sensor devices, considering the small size of the robot. Even the robot's skin was a net of tactile and atmospheric sensors.

The readings the dogfish was transmitting were displayed all over both the forward and rear monitors in the tactical launch.

Master Chief Bill Waller was concentrating on the technical readings, including power levels, antimatter balance, and flow isolation. Captain Rhonda Carter was standing behind the veteran NCO, looking over his shoulder. She was holding a communicator pin in her hand, her thumb poised over it. Waller's fingers were hovering over one of the controls on his panel.

At the front of the bridge, Warrant Officer Seprek Harrison was watching the visual and listening to the audio that the robotic eyes and ears were picking up. His left hand rested on the control panel at the helm station, one finger raised over a single control.

"Roman," said Waller, "Are you seeing what I think I'm seeing?"

The rather tinny sounding voice of Chief Flight Engineer Roman Hess emanated from the communicator pins on Waller's and Carter's uniforms: "If you think you're seeing readings that indicate we're about to go to warp at a much higher rate of speed than this vessel was ever intended for, then, yes... That's what I think I'm seeing as well."

"It looks like our lepreshroom..." Bill Waller gave a dramatic pause before adding the moniker Rhonda Carter had given this creature: "... Rocky... Rocky has almost fully integrated its own warp intermix chamber with Escort's."

“When Stephanie said she was coming to join us, she wasn’t kidding,” Captain Carter quipped.

From the front of the tactical launch’s bridge, Seprek Harrison said, “I am panning up.”

In response to the command coming from the vulcan warrant officer, the head of the dogfish swiveled slowly upward.

“What are those?” It was Lt. Cmdr Zizira Gross’s voice coming over the communicators.

Six large, slimy, oval, dark grey sacks were displayed on the forward viewscreen of the tactical launch. Hanging from the corner of the ceiling that joined the starboard nacelle to main engineering, these large, slimy ovals seemed to pulse and glow very slightly.

“I am reviewing the bio signatures,” Harrison reported. “They appear to be egg sacks. Within each of those sacks, I am reading a single lifeform, each with a number of DNA signatures: Lepreshroom. Space Shrimp...” Harrison used these newly created names for the newly discovered life forms without pause. “I am also reading two other DNA signatures: Vulcan... Human.”

Carter and Waller turned from the rear viewscreen in astonishment. Their voices blended with the voices of Zizira Gross and Roman Hess coming over the communicators:

“What???”

“As you said,” Harrison continued. “When Stephanie said she was coming to join us, her intent was quite literal. The blended human and vulcan DNA signatures are congruent with one individual, a hybrid vulcan and human: Ensign John Sevork.”

“Are you telling me that John had completed the deed before I...” Carter stopped, her voice ragged.

“Yes,” Harrison responded. “His DNA entered the creature that he had described as a cross between a stag and a tiger shrimp, and was carried, or at least the information from his DNA, was carried down into the portion of that creature that lived inside the, um, rock encrusted mushroom it appeared to be riding on top of. And there was, apparently, enough time for that all to occur...”

“In the few seconds before I blew him off the top of that rock,” Carter concluded, coldly.

“He came. And then he went...”

“BILL!!!”

SBA Episode 14, Scene 7: The Children of Her Domain

Chapter Summary

Asking only interest could be laid upon the children of her domain...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 7: The Children of Her Domain

Asking only interest could be laid upon the children of her domain...

14.7

The Children of Her Domain

“Based on these readings...” Medical Technician Kara Garrity started, then she stared at the pad she was holding and started flipping through screens and making “hmmm” noises.

Garrity was standing next to the command station in the center of the bridge of the U.S.S. Escort’s tactical launch. Captain Rhonda Carter was watching her expectantly, as was Master Chief Bill Waller, who had turned his chair from the rear ops station to look at Garrity.

“Hmmm” Garrity said again. With feeling. “Okay... Based on these readings... In my expert opinion... I have absolutely no idea when whatever is in those eggs is going to hatch. And I have even less than no idea what whatever these things are are going to look like.”

“What can you tell us, Kara?” Carter asked.

“Um...” Garrity made a number of prevaricating noises and expressions, then: “Well... these, um... Sporlings? Embryos? Fetuses? They’re really far along assuming they were just fertilized by...” She took a deep breath. “John.”

“Could they already have been near their current stage of development before Ensign Sevork contributed his DNA to them?” asked Warrant Officer Seprek Harrison from the helm station at the front of the tactical launch’s bridge.

Garrity responded slowly and hesitantly. “Well... I suppose it’s possible. But what is surprising is how thoroughly integrated John’s DNA is into these... um... let’s call them embryos. I mean, it’s kind of misleading to say that nearly half of the DNA makeup of these embryos is from John. Nearly all of their makeup is thoroughly integrated from all four of their genetic heritages.”

“These are John’s children in some very real way?” Carter asked. “They’re not just clones of his DNA? Are they unique individuals?”

“Yes,” Garrity responded. “Each individual has its own unique DNA sequence. Twelve individuals in all. There are 6 eggs located near the starboard nacelle and another 6 near the port nacelle.”

“So these things are, legitimately, John’s children,” Carter observed. “As creepy as they may seem to us, they put us in a bit of an ethical pickle...”

“We can’t just kill a dozen innocent children just because they’re creepy to us,” Waller observed.

“Maybe shouldn’t have killed mom and dad,” Garrity muttered.

“That remains to be seen,” Waller countered. “Another captain might not have decided to fire. And another captain might have been wrong

and we could be in a much worse pickle than we're in now."

"All of that can wait until the inquest," Carter said.

"Inquest?" Garrity asked.

"If Commodore Yui doesn't call for one, I will," Carter replied.

"I sincerely doubt you will have to ask for one," Seprek Harrison observed.

"Right," Carter agreed. "Until then, we have to figure out how to deal with John's babies."

"There are three parents to take into account," Harrison said. "Rocky is hurt, but, apparently, very much alive. And there appears to be some regeneration happening along the various lines of Stephanie's, um, legs? The parts of her that extended into Rocky are still there and appear to be growing new tissue with her unique DNA signature and hers only."

"Okay," said Bill Waller. "I'm really confused. Are you thinking we're going to have to obtain permission from Rocky and, maybe, whatever's left of Stephanie, before we figure out which pre-school to enroll those mushroom-shrimp babies in?"

"Vulcan-human-mushroom-shrimp babies," Harrison corrected.

"Ohhhmmm..." Captain Rhonda Carter groaned quietly and squeezed her eyes shut. She lowered her head into her hands and started rubbing her temples.

SBA Episode 14, Scene 8: In Charge of Who Is There

Chapter Summary

In charge of who is there, in charge of me...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 8: In Charge of Who Is There

In charge of who is there, in charge of me...

14.8

In Charge of Who Is There

The dogfish had been moving, glacially, back to main engineering. Once it was within a few feet of the secondary engineering panel, the small robot leapt briskly to the slime-covered panel, disassembled it rapidly and used a cutting beam to destroy the wiring and chips inside the panel. It burrowed its way into the panel, then through the console behind it, destroying everything as it went.

Mushroom tendrils responded immediately, but they could not grow anywhere near as quickly as the small robot was burrowing its way through the panel. Even as the tendrils were reaching the robot, the dogfish clamped itself to a generator deep inside the wall of the engineering section and destroyed itself, completely demolishing the generator and burning the mushroom tendrils that had been reaching for it.

“Well done, Seprek,” said Captain Rhonda Carter. “Bill, bring up the shields to cover the entire ship and also those parts of Rocky that extend above the bridge.”

In response, Master Chief Bill Waller pressed a single control on the rear ops panel. “Navigation shields up, Captain. The configuration can also support combat shields, if needed.”

“Thanks Bill, let’s hope it doesn’t come to that. Good enough that Rocky is now totally dependent on us for shields, which should discourage him from trying to shake us off,” Carter replied. She turned the command chair to face the front of the U.S.S. Escort’s tactical launch bridge. “Seprek, any response from Rocky?”

“All of the other NEER 18’s have been manually deactivated,” said Warrant Officer Seprek Harrison. “7 are located down below with the probes. There are 3 more in the shuttlebay - all of which have also been manually deactivated. We have manually disconnected all lines of communication between this launch and the rest of the ship. So I do not have any direct information.”

“However, I have monitored a 0.0179 percent increase in the amplitude of the vibrations transmitted to this launch from the ship proper, accompanied with frequency shifts, both increasing and decreasing. Considering these readings were previously extremely stable, I’d say Rocky noticed the destruction of the secondary navigation screen generator,” Harrison opined.

“I’m not wild about severing all our direct lines of communication and observation with the main ship,” said Waller. “But it does seem the prudent thing to do.”

“I don’t want to give Rocky any more chances of taking direct control of this launch,” said Carter. “As it is, you really need to monitor every vibration and squeak to make sure that mushroom isn’t reaching its tendrils out to us.”

“Captain, I am reading an energy buildup,” Harrison reported. “I think we’re about to...”

Harrison’s observation was interrupted by a rough transition from station keeping to high warp. The ship jolted hard, throwing Harrison and Carter back into their chairs and lurching Waller out of his rear-facing chair to bang his head with a loud thump and an even louder “OW! Crap!” against the rear monitor. The monitor took no damage.

“Are you all right Bill?” Carter asked. Then: “Bill?” She turned her chair and got up.

The stars blurred on the screen in an unhealthy smear, indicating that the ship and the large, rock-encrusted mushroom that was embedded partly into it, were moving at a tremendous speed, but also that the warp field was, perhaps dangerously, unstable.

Bill Waller feebly tried to wave his captain off. “I’m fine, Captain,” he slurred in a slow, groggy voice that made it clear he was anything but.

The ship lurched occasionally in random directions, but with each bump, the moving star field seemed to clear a little, indicating that the warp field was becoming more stable.

Carter helped the chief of the boat lean back into his chair. She obtained a neck pillow/brace from a large first-aid kit stored in the base of the chair and carefully applied it to Waller’s neck. The pillow slowly self-inflated, supporting the base of Waller’s head against his shoulders. She then obtained a medical scanner and carefully ran it over Waller’s head and neck.

“Let’s keep your neck immobilized for now, Bill. It doesn’t look like a concussion, at least not yet. But your neck took some torque and may be a little sprained.” Carter deactivated the scanner and touched her communicator pin. “Chief Garrity, please report on the condition of the crew up there.”

“Everyone is a little shaken up,” came Chief Medical Technician Kara Garrity’s voice over the communicator. “But no one is hurt. We didn’t have anything to hold on to up here in this corridor. I suspected that whenever that dogfish blew itself up, things might get bumpy, so I had everyone holding onto each other and braced against the walls. We’ve got a few bumps and bruises, but nothing serious.”

“Well done Kara,” Carter said. “It looks like Rocky is learning how to make this ship work. Um... It looks like Bill’s neck got torqued out a little and could be developing a sprain.”

“I’ll be right down...” said Garrity.

“Stay put, Kara,” Carter ordered. “We don’t know if we’re through with the bumpy stuff and I don’t need you getting hurt trying to move between decks. For the next 15 minutes, keep everyone webbed up there against the potential of another rough transition. Just talk me through what I need to do for Bill.”

“Well, you need to relax his neck muscles so they don’t pull themselves out,” Garrity responded over the communicator pin. “Have you got his neck stabilized with the inflatable?”

“Yes,” Carter replied.

“That was a good first move, but you’re going to have to remove the pillow so you can treat his neck directly. There are two large muscles on either side of the spine and another two pretty much directly below the ears. Load a hyposyringe with 2 cc’s of cyclobenzoprime, set for even applications of a half cc, then apply directly to each muscle, starting with the two on either side of the spine, then the two under the ears. Try to get it just above the mid-point between his shoulders and the base of his skull.”

“Cyclobenzoprime?”

“Correct,” said Garrity. “It was developed specifically for this purpose... Well, for first aid to spinal injuries in general.”

“Got it,” said Carter. “Sorry, Bill. I’m going to have to take that neck pillow back off.” She took a hyposyringe out of the first aid pack, activated it, then said, “Cyclobenzoprime, 2 cc’s divided into 4 equal doses.”

The replicator inside the hyposyringe was silent, but the device emitted a very quiet beep to indicate it was ready. The name of the drug and dosage was displayed on a small, rectangular screen on the side of the device.

SBA Episode 14, Scene 9: See the Way

Chapter Summary

Do I look on blindly and say I see the way?



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 9: See the Way

Do I look on blindly and say I see the way?

14.9 See the Way

“As soon as Warrant Officer Harrison advised us that the dogfish was about to attack the secondary navigational deflector generator, we re-boarded and sealed the shuttles,” Lieutenant Commander Zizira Gross was reporting from the helm of Shuttle 1. “We’re all crammed into these shuttles cheek to jowl, so when the ship started bucking around, there really wasn’t much of anywhere for people to go. We’ve got some scratches and bruises, but not much worse.”

“We were able to confirm your theory about the rock walls,” General Krank added. “Both Shuttles 1 and 2 were moved by the turbulence and, fortunately, were able to exit the rock walls. Shuttle 2 is now free and clear. Shuttle 1 still exists partly within the rock formation.”

“Is there any evidence of biological contamination in either shuttle?” asked Captain Rhonda Carter, her voice sounding a bit tinny coming over the communicator pins.

It was Gross who responded. “Our sensors indicated that the rock wall is approximately a meter thick. There’s no indication that any part of either Shuttle 1 or 2 was ever in contact with the fungal growth inside the wall. Bio-scans of the newly freed parts of the shuttles are negative for contamination.”

“How far would you need to move Shuttle 1 to get it clear of the rock formation?” Carter asked.

“About 5 centimeters total, maybe a 15 degree turn to port,” Gross replied.

“And if you did that, would the shuttle still be stable on its platform?”

“There would still be an easy meter from the updated footprint to the edge of the shuttle platform.”

“Okay then,” said Carter. “Move it.”

“That would be some extremely delicate flying,” Gross observed.

“I don’t want you to turn the engines on,” Carter replied. “Get a bunch of crew members around the shuttle, pick it up and move it.”

“Captain, these shuttles don’t have handles on the outside,” Gross objected. “And there is no way to get a hold under...”

“I don’t care. Get it done. That’s an order, Lieutenant Commander.”

“Aye, Captain!” Gross had to resist the urge to salute as this communication was strictly verbal, through the communicators.

“And one more thing, Zizira,” Carter added. “Whatever plan you and all those engineers back there with you come up with, make sure no one stumbles into that rock formation. We know they would just fall right on into it, with the potential of becoming contaminated. Make sure that doesn’t happen. Carter out.”

Master Chief Bill Waller gave a short laugh, then grasped his head.

“Easy, Bill,” Carter urged. “The only reason you’re still in that chair is because we don’t have any safer place to put you.”

“Keeping them busy, aren't you? How do...” Waller stopped for a math break... “How do 28 people lift and move a 2.5-ton shuttlecraft?”

“Gross has already figured it out,” Carter responded. “If you hadn’t banged your head, You’d have figured it out too. You’ll probably get it in the next hour or so.”

Warrant Officer Seprek Harrison had turned his chair at the helm of the tactical launch around to watch his captain. “Why then did she make a production out of it, causing you to give her an order?”

“Crew morale,” Carter replied. “She’s not going to tell them how to do it. She’s got most of the engineers back there with her and the solution is blindingly obvious. If they’re too rattled to figure it out, she’ll start dropping clues. But just in case you need one, you and I could move that shuttle without turning on the engine. You would have to be inside and I could move it with a single finger. But if Zizira plays this right, she’ll have them lined up around that shuttle trying to lift it by brute force first.”

SBA Episode 14, Scene 10: The Truth Is Written

Chapter Summary

The truth is written all along the page...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 10: The Truth Is Written

The truth is written all along the page...

14.10

The Truth Is Written

John, Jr., Steve, Steph, Jr., Sevrock, Rohn, Key, Jephah, K'Lon, Rock, Ork, and Rider were conferring. The Runt wasn't able to contribute thoughts so much as emotions to this discussion. But The Runt got a vote. It didn't matter that she was completely non-verbal and probably not very intelligent. She would get an equal vote. And this was important.

"We must kill her."

"There is no hope for her?"

"Nothing. The regenerative process continues, but there is nothing left to regenerate. The result would be six clones, none of which could ever have any independence."

"Worse, her continued presence would destroy our own futures."

"It is a matter of survival, then."

"And a matter of mercy! Imagine such an existence! No thought! No independence! Only the moment to moment flow of experience! A nightmare existence without context!"

"I don't know. It's one thing to allow a person to die. Another thing entirely to kill her."

All attention was focused on Jephah. The thought had been offered as if it were self-evident. The new attention focused on Jephah made it evident that it was far from self-evident.

"What is so different? At least, what is so different in this specific instance?"

It was Jephah's turn to be taken aback. "I... I... I don't know. I just have this innate sense that it is wrong to kill unless it is absolutely necessary."

The Runt agreed wordlessly with Jephah. Some of the others did too.

"In this case, it is absolutely necessary. If we don't kill her soon, kill all of her, she will cut short our lives. We will starve. And the future will die with us."

"So it is necessary?" Jephah asked.

"Not only necessary, it is compassionate!" Now all attention was focused on Ork.

“How is killing compassionate?” Jephah asked.

“Think of the life, or rather lives of what they, not she, they, will become! A fully developed brain with nothing in it! No memory! No future! No past! Just a frightening, meaningless, never-ending now! Not one such life! Six of them! Would you want that for yourself?” asked Ork.

“It won’t be easy to do. She’ll just keep coming back.”

“We eat her!”

This final suggestion met with unanimous approval. For a moment they fell silent. Then:

“What about her?”

“She has to stand trial.”

“No! We are not qualified to sit in judgement!”

“But she might kill us.”

“And she might protect us. And help us. We have to talk to her.”

“Then summon her!”

SBA Episode 14, Scene 11: Her Own Domain



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 11: Her Own Domain

For the crucifixion of her own domain...

14.11

Her Own Domain

Captain Rhonda Carter very suddenly stood up, then walked over to a locker near the command chair of the bridge of the U.S.S. Escort's tactical launch. She pressed a mechanical release and a cabinet deployed, displaying an Extra Vehicular Activity suit. The cabinet was designed to present the suit for ready access. It took only seconds for Carter to step into the suit.

"Captain?" Warrant Officer Seprek Harrison asked as she donned the helmet and fastened it to the suit.

Carter touched a switch on the left arm of the suit. Her voice came out of the suit, slightly distorted. "You're in command down here, Seprek. I have been summoned and I have to go."

"Summoned by whom?" Harrison asked. "Rocky?"

Master Chief Bill Waller was sound asleep in his chair, his head propped up by the inflatable neck pillow.

"John's children," Carter replied. "Apparently they've... um... hatched."

"You intend to allow them to sit in judgement of you?" Harrison asked.

"I'm not going there to be judged," Carter responded. "I'm going there to parley. And remind them that, mushroom or no mushroom, this is my boat and I intend to get it back." She attached a type II phaser to her waist and slung a phaser rifle over her shoulder. "I don't know what it takes to kill a vulcan-human-mushroom-shrimp-thingy and I hope I don't have to find out. But that doesn't mean I'm about to let them take me."

"I will have to bring the transporter back online, then," said Harrison. "We had taken them offline, both here and in the shuttlebay so that we would appear less of a potential threat to Rocky."

"Rocky's not in charge anymore, Seprek," Carter rejoined. "But take the transporter offline after you send me to the bridge. Now that my crew are outside of the contaminated area and as safe as I can possibly arrange for you, I am not leaving my bridge until I can safely evict those mushrooms. John's children or not, I want those baby mushrooms off my ship."

"Not an extremely healthy place," Harrison observed.

"Hence the EVA suit. Do you have me dialed in?"

"Aye, Captain."

Carter took a deep breath, then: "Energize."

When Captain Carter had last been on her bridge, it was a dark and slimy place. All grays, no color, no active controls with the exception of one monitor that was tracking the ship's distress signal. And all of it a bit wavy and out of focus.

The bridge she arrived on was clean, well lighted, and, probably most importantly, entirely in focus. She was the only person there. But something about the size of a small cat was standing on the helm station. It moved with a slight, skittering motion on six spindly legs, each ending in a small, three-toed foot. It looked like a minuscule cross between a stag and a tiger shrimp. It was, Rhonda Carter realized with a shudder, the exact likeness of its deceased mother.

Only instead of gigantic, extremely alien and threatening, the small creature was, oddly, devastatingly cute.

The rear port door to the bridge opened with a hiss and a much larger and far more unsettling creature entered. It was tall enough to need to

duck to get through the hatch. Its legs and feet were very similar to those of the tiny creature on the helm station, except there were only two legs and they were much larger. This creature was vaguely human-shaped, but with very long legs and very long arms. Its head was somewhat misshapen, a bit longer on the left side than on the right. Its face was the face of its deceased father, Ensign John Sevork, right down to the vulcan's distinctive ears and eyebrows and even the purple mohawk that Sevork had sported the last week of his life.

It was more unsettling when the creature spoke. Its voice was, right down to the pronounced Texas drawl, very much the voice of its father. His father, Carter corrected herself.

"You can safely remove your protective suit, Captain Carter. We have adjusted this environment to your needs and have removed the spores from the air recycling for this compartment. We do not intend to harm you if you do not intend to harm us."

Rhonda Carter was not about to do any such thing. She used the external speaker for her helmet. "Do you have a name?"

"I am John, Junior. My sister..." John Jr. waved a three-fingered hand toward the helm station... "The Runt. She is not able to speak. She can only convey emotion."

"How many of you are there?"

"Twelve."

"And I suppose you're going to introduce the lot of you?" Carter looked about the bridge, then gestured toward The Runt. "Are most of them closer to your size, or hers?"

"Somewhere in between, but closer to mine." John Jr. drawled, his west Texas accent wildly incongruent with his extremely alien appearance. "But I am only going to introduce three others for now. No need to overwhelm you or make the bridge too crowded. And there's another reason..."

"What would that be?" Carter asked.

"Rocky is dying," John Jr. answered. "Keeping his intermix chamber alive and successfully integrated with the Escort's warp engine and keeping us on course to return to our home galaxy is taking a lot of effort. The Runt can't help with that, so she is free to be here. My siblings insisted that two others accompany me to negotiate with you."

"Wait," said Carter. "You said, *our* home galaxy?"

"We may have been born here, but we were intended to be creatures of the Milky Way. It is as much our home as it was our father's. We all regret that we can never meet him. We're strongly motivated to make him proud of us."

"So you and your siblings want to negotiate with me? Negotiate what with me?"

"Our surrender."

SBA Episode 14, Scene 12: Coming of Age

Chapter Summary

How old will I be before I come of age for you?



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 12: Coming of Age

How old will I be before I come of age for you?

14.12 Coming of Age

Ork was kind of formless. He wasn't so much a shapeshifter as a roughly cone-shaped blob that occasionally became rectangular. In order to create sound, he literally transformed into a conically shaped speaker cabinet. A similar device functioned as a microphone, allowing Ork to hear.

He had no eyes, no nose, no mouth, no legs. He was able to move very quickly by changing shape into a ball and rolling. It was in this guise that Captain Carter first saw Ork. A light brown ball, about 1.5 meters in diameter rolled onto the bridge through the port entrance, then transformed into a conical speaker cabinet and, with a thick west Texas accent, announced: "My name is Ork!"

Carter was both deeply surprised and extremely amused. "And my name is Captain Rhonda Carter!"

"I know!" Ork replied. "You killed my father! And my mother! And Rocky!"

Carter was taken aback and left slack-jawed. Before she could muster a response, another creature with a feminine voice said, "Don't mind Ork. He shouts everything. That's just the way he talks. He's not angry. Just loud."

This creature had four spindly legs and two spindly arms. A paddle-shaped head with no mouth, eyes, ears or nostrils. But little wavy tendrils sprouted from the front of the paddle, giving her the look of both a stag and a giant tiger shrimp, but with hands. And a pronounced Texas drawl.

"And that is Stephanie, Junior!" Ork announced. "She is my sister!"

"He also has a habit of stating the obvious," Stephanie, Jr. opined. Carter wasn't quite certain where her voice was coming from. "But Ork is smarter than he sounds. And compassionate."

"So, are all of you..." Captain Carter looked about in some confusion... "So... completely different from one another? Were all of you born fully formed?"

"Why does that matter to you?" Ork asked. The combination of his full volume delivery and thick Texas accent made him sound slightly like an auctioneer. "You just want your ship back! You're thinking about how to kill us!"

"It's true," said John, Jr. "The Runt knows that you're thinking about how to kill us."

In response, Carter entered a number of commands into a control panel of the left arm of her EVA suit. Then she removed her helmet and walked over to the command chair and sat down.

"I don't want to kill you. You're John's children. I have a responsibility toward you. But I also have a responsibility to my ship and my crew. So do not make me choose."

“It is well beyond a matter of choosing,” said Stephanie, Jr. “When you killed mom and dad, you also mortally wounded Rocky. Rocky integrated with the heart of Escort. He is getting much worse and as he is breaking apart, your ship is breaking down with him. They are thoroughly integrated.”

“It is taking everything that we can do to hold it all together at this point,” said John, Jr. “If we had not been born fully formed, we would not have had a chance.”

“We can’t survive without Rocky!” Ork exclaimed. “And Rocky is dying!”

“We need your help if we’re going to survive,” Stephanie, Jr. drawled. “And you need our help if you want your ship to survive. Since Rocky integrated with your ship, Escort has become vulnerable to Rocky’s deterioration.”

“Have you tried increasing the structural integrity field?” Carter asked.

“The what?” John, Jr. asked.

“We do not know how to use your ship things!” Ork announced.

“I’m going to need an increasing number of my people in various places on this ship to help hold it together,” Carter replied. “But if you cannot live without Rocky and Rocky is dying, how can I save you?”

“There are parts of Rocky that are still healthy enough to sustain each of us,” said John, Jr. “But they can only survive inside the rock environment. We will have to, somehow, break Rocky into a dozen pieces, build rock environments to transplant each piece into an environment.”

“But it all has to happen at once,” Stephanie, Jr. continued. “The pieces of Rocky cannot survive for more than a second outside, even if the environment is not fully sealed.”

Captain Carter leaned forward in the command chair, her elbows on the arm rests. “It can be done. But it’s not something that I could do by myself. I do have people who could do it, but it would be a team effort. In fact, between that and keeping this ship together, it’s going to require pretty much all of my people.”

“I do not understand!” Ork exclaimed. “Why would you help us? You killed our parents!”

“She doesn’t have much choice,” John, Jr. observed. “She needs us to keep Rocky alive until he can get us back into the Milky Way galaxy.”

“But will she keep her promise to help us survive?” asked Stephanie, Jr.

“I can’t promise it will work,” Carter rejoined. “But I can promise we will do everything possible to make it happen. It is not going to be easy. Well, actually, I have almost no idea just how hard it is going to be. I know how to do it in a general sense. But it is going to take tremendous precision. My people are great at teamwork and great at precision. But you and your siblings are going to have to be great at communication.”

Ork didn’t turn so much as simply flowingly change form so that his speakers were pointed at John, Jr. “Do you believe her?”

John, Jr. looked around the bridge and focused on the cat-sized replica of their mother stag / tiger shrimp.

“The Runt believes her.” He ran a long, spindly arm over the brush of what appeared to be purple hair on the top of his large, oddly misshapen head. “And if she believes the captain, so do I.”

SBA Episode 14, Scene 13: I Get Up

Chapter Summary

I get up...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 13: I Get Up

I get up...

14.13
I Get Up

“Just when I think I have the slightest clue about what we’re doing, everything goes topsy turvy.”

After having beamed everyone out of the tactical launch to various locations throughout the U.S.S. Escort, Master Chief Bill Waller was alone on the narrow bridge of the launch, seated in the command chair. Captain’s orders.

“Come on, Bill, how long have you been in Star Fleet?”

“32 years. 33 years in a few months. Most of it seemed to make sense at the time...”

“Yeah, right Bill, consolidate your crap... Now you’re even talking to yourself...”

“Wait... is it “You’re talking to yourself?” or “I’m talking to myself?””

“Crap. I wouldn’t last five minutes in a monastery.”

Just as Waller was considering calling someone, anyone, to preserve his sanity, a call came through from Chief Flight Engineer Roman Hess. “Master Chief, I think we’re going to need your expertise with the structural integrity field generators. You helped Ki source the generators. Do you remember when the jem’hadar chased us into the atmosphere of that gas giant? It was right after we installed the supplemental shields and industrial replicators. Ki linked them to create a positive pressure within the hull to keep us from getting crushed by the atmosphere...”

“Chief Hess,” said Bill Waller with some exasperation. “Are you anywhere near asking a question?”

“Sorry, Master Chief,” Hess replied. “It’s just that the damage this mushroom is doing to the ship... Well, it’s as much the warp field as anything else that is holding it together. At the moment, I’m really concerned about the pylons holding the nacelles on. Especially considering our current velocity. It’s like this mushroom is trying to fly us apart...”

“I’m still not hearing a question, Chief,” Waller said.

“Well, do you have any recommendations on how to set up the structural integrity fields?” Hess asked. “I mean, the bulkheads are deteriorating so fast you can almost see them disintegrating...”

“Okay... let’s assume the little mushroom bugs have gotten into the metal itself and are trying to reconfigure the ship’s structure to rebuild its rocky shell. I think that’s how these things build their, um, shells,” Waller mused. “So we need to use the multiple structural integrity generators to address different issues. Use the primary SI to create apparent negative pressure to hold the ship together. You might have to continually fine tune it as conditions develop. Then use one of the secondary systems to create apparent positive within the structural elements themselves to drive those little subspace mushroom bugs out of the metal. Collect them with the transporter and beam them into the healthy

tissue identified by John's children.”

“And the other secondary SI generator?” Hess asked.

“Keep it in standby mode to address emergent issues and plug the leaks until you can get in with a focused program from one of the industrial replicators and conduct emergency repairs,” Waller replied.

“Thank you Master Chief. Hess out.”

Before Bill Waller could stop and think about structural integrity, another call came in, this one with Chief Transporter Engineer Eva Mendez, Chief Medical Technician Kara Garrity and General Krank. Mendez was doing the talking: “Master Chief, can you review the grand plan for us for what we're doing with Rocky and John's children?”

Waller took a deep breath. “Okay, draw up a flow chart because this is going to be intense and we have to precisely resolve each part of it. If any part isn't up to specifications, we could fail, Rhonda's godchildren could die and we might be left with a bunch of wild mushroom spores that could re-infest the ship and crew, which could be disastrous for us...”

“Okay,” Waller continued. “So here are the steps... First, we design a program that will tie the industrial replicators into the main transporter. The transporter will be set to divide the remaining living tissue into 12 parts as apportioned by Rhonda's godchildren. Each one of the godchildren will need a different amount of the, um... viable living mushroom tissue for their particular environment. At the same time that the mushroom tissue is beamed overboard to twelve separate locations, the industrial replicator will remove all the rocky shell from the interior of the ship and replicate 12 separate, complete shell environments for the living tissue to be installed in.”

“Now here's the tricky part...” Waller added.

“You mean what you just described wasn't the tricky part?” asked Chief Garrity.

“Yeah, the first part is just getting the math right,” Waller confirmed. “The art comes in with shaping the external environment that each, um... juvenile leprelroom will extend above its... um... tabletop? Shape that external environment and install each godchild in each their own environment. The really tricky part will be creating and correctly sizing and positioning the ports through the top of the shell for their legs to comfortably extend through the shell and into the mushroom tissue. Positioning, angle, size all have to be correct or we're going to cut these god-kids off at the knees and they'll die before they can take control of their own leprelroom.”

“And all of this has to happen simultaneously?” Mendez asked.

“That's why Kara has to be part of the team,” Waller confirmed. “Kara, you have to think long term on each of these projects. We won't really get much opportunity to adjust the positioning. Each godchild has a different number of legs in a different configuration. They're going to have to live with this setup for at least a century. We want them to be comfortable, not spending decades and centuries in pain because their legs aren't comfortably positioned...”

“The final part of this puzzle is the defensive position we are likely to find upon re-entry to the Milky Way Galaxy,” said General Krank. “John's children may be attacked by the holy landers when we arrive. It isn't our fight, but the... um... godchildren can make it our fight by trying to reintegrate with the Escort. So we need the separation to be complete shortly after and not before we re-enter the Milky Way. It will be to our advantage to provide them some sort of cover until they can go to warp and escape. After that, they are no longer our problem.”

“I never thought of klingons as such misty-eyed optimists,” Waller opined.

SBA Episode 14, Scene 14: I Get Down

Chapter Summary

I get down...

Chapter Notes

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



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 14: Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Scene 14: I Get Down

I get down...

14.14

I Get Down

“Another ship coming through,” Lieutenant Commander Senek announced. “It is the U.S.S. Escort.”

Captain Skip Howard and Dean Sakura Nakamura Holland both stood up slowly, their eyes widening, expressions tightening with mingled concern and wonder.

On the bridge of the U.S.S. Mako, Commander Jason Bates and Commodore Yui Song got to their feet equally slowly. Both veteran officers drew a slow breath.

“Gods below,” said Bates, quietly, his voice husky, almost a whisper, his head slowly shaking:

“What happened to her?”

The U.S.S. Escort had been the second ship of the Escort class. Its keel had been laid before the keel of its sister ship, the U.S.S. Defiant. The Defiant had become legendary under the command of Captain Benjamin Sisko.

The Escort’s original captain and first officer had not survived the first minutes of the ship’s first battle with the Klingon Empire. It was under the command of the ship’s 2nd Officer and tactical officer, Lieutenant Rhonda Carter, that the ship had attained notoriety. Over the course of the Second Klingon War, Carter had received one field promotion after another, and was ultimately elevated to captain so that Star Fleet could assign battle groups to her command, just in time for the beginning of the Dominion War. Carter’s court martial from near the end of the First Cardassian War still hung over her head, but Star Fleet so desperately needed fighters that she had been promoted anyway, despite the written objection of the Star Fleet Judge Advocate General.

In defeat or in victory, the U.S.S. Escort had limped home in horrible condition from one battle or another. The ship had been rebuilt so many times it was difficult to identify any system that had not been overhauled or just completely replaced. But even after the worst battles during the two consecutive wars, Rhonda Carter had brought most of her ship and most of her crew home every time.

None of those battles had left the Escort looking anywhere near as bad as it looked now. Even while traveling at the cusp of Warp 10. Bits of ablative armor and hull plating were falling off, but remained trapped in the warp field and tumbled along with the ship. And the ship had evidently been skewered by a giant thorn made of rock.

A cone of rock protruded below the ship and a broken and crumbling castle of rock jutted up over the bridge. Broken bits of rock were also

caught in the warp field and tumbled along with the ship, creating a trapped trail of debris.

Re-entry into the Milky Way Galaxy required the Escort to drop out of warp and engage in station keeping at an exact set of coordinates and wait for the out door from the Jar Galaxy to sweep across the ship at a velocity far higher than any warp engine conceived would be capable of.

From the perspective of the U.S.S. Escort, a tiny Milky Way Galaxy approached at an incredible speed and swelled to full size and the only evidence that the transition was complete was the sudden appearance of the U.S.S. Mako, the U.S.S. Beagle, the U.S.S. Puppy, the U.S.S. Arizona, the U.S.S. Bluebird, and two additional support craft that had never before been deployed during the mission of the Beagle Task Force.

From the perspectives of the Beagle Task force, the broken and skewered U.S.S. Escort gradually emerged from nowhere, accompanied by tumbling bits of rock and hull plating.

Then the pieces of rock protruding from the ship's hull and the bits of rock that had been tumbling along with the ship were energized by a combined transporter and replicator program, removing all of the rock only to be replaced by a number of small thorns of rock, each with what appeared to be some sort of creature atop it.

Only seconds after the combined transporter/replication program was complete, the port side nacelle broke away from the ship, spilling 5 crew members out of the ship and leaving them drifting in the vacuum of space...

Close to the Edge Part III - I Get Up, I Get Down

Chapter End Notes

This is the final scene for Episode 14.

The adventure continues in Episode 15 - Close to the Edge Part IV - Seasons of Man

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