

## Archaeological Anarchy

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## Archaeological Anarchy

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### Summary

"You're talking to a god-interpreted alien. They don't care for statesmanship. Soo Bajoran Prophecy." — Trek BBS: May/June 2024 Challenge: The Phoenix-X helps a Vau N'Akat uncover an ancient Breen artifact.

### Notes

Author's notes: This was written as part of the Trek BBS May/June 2024 Challenge and continues in 2393. The Jade Fox is later fully crewed, but mind-switched, in "Better Angels of our Nature" (future 2410). Zeta is an old side-kick that appeared in Star Trek: 001 (future 2752), "Second Life" (same era), and Earth Spacedock RP (2410). BOB revealed his Beguiler Operator origins in "Devil's Leftovers" (2392) and Coalescence is later visited in "Neutrality for Beginners" (2410). The Vau N'Akat are from Star Trek: Prodigy.

May/June Challenge: Archaeological Anarchy: Whether it's hunting tox uthats, assembling stones of Gols or transporting kir'sharas, your Captain or crew, in some form, accidentally or on mission, has to deal with an ancient artifact. Where and when is it from? Does it hold any meaning, have any supernatural power or were the legends just legends?

### ***Trek BBS: May/June 2024 Challenge***

"Archaeological Anarchy"

The *Prometheus*-class U.S.S. *Phoenix-X* trekked precariously and substantially through space until smacking into a giant, rocky asteroid. Looking up, Commander Seifer noticed the *D'Kora*-class marauder *Jade Fox* approaching right next to it and them.

"Sir, do not trust the Ferengi," warned BOB. "They're sneaky and under-handed and you'll accrue dysfunctional interaction for later mental suppression."

Seifer did a double-take. "But aren't you one of them, and representing them? Never mind. I'm sure everyone in the vicinity is amicable and agreeable." He then turned his attention to the screen with hailing frequencies open. "Protruding, Scandalous Vessel, we are here to investigate a remote, subcutaneous polaron pulse responsible for swelling and threatening the atmospheric systems of the colony world Coalescence."

"Yeah, yeah. Us too," came the unconvincing, on-screen response from a grey tendril-haired woman of the Vau N'Akat species. A hand-sized robotic spider crawled up to her shoulder. "*The name's Arlene, of the repossessed, non-affiliated Jade Fox. This little guy is Zeta. He, my colleague BOK and I are explorers, traders, bounty hunters— you name it. We also help those in need.*"

BOB's eyes widened at the sight of the other cybernetically enhanced Ferengi on the *Jade Fox*. "BOK! It's me, BOB. We were in the Beguiler Operators together?"

"Oof. Those were hinky, alphabetically competitive times," BOK admitted before leafing through the deep scan analysis of the asteroid. "*And, not to dwell on said epochs, but they were as hinky as this polaron pulse evidently is, as being activated by a signal from Coalescence itself.*"

The spider, Zeta, perked at that new information. \*Click! Click! Cchhrrip!\*

"Zeta says we'll go check it out while you guys take a conference room meeting, scan more things, or diverge into alternate timelines. As for us, gaining favour with the colony here would do wonders for future trading and/or bounty hunting: the coolest of the space things to

do," Arlene smirked, charismatically. "*Fox out!*"

The *Phoenix-X* watched as the *D'Kora*-class ship turned in space and headed for the nearby planet. BOB then remembered, "There has been rumour of a clue uncovered about an ancient Breen artifact being tracked to this location."

"A clue? Can that term be any more of a terribly over-used trope? Just say the name of the actual thing," Seifer lambasted. "Ughh. Never mind. Hachi, un-nose us and pursue course. We must pre-repair whatever damage they've not done."

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Beaming down to the overcast southern hemisphere of Planet Coalescence, Seifer, Veker and BOB found Arlene, the arm-attached Zeta and BOK scanning large Breen-made doors off the side of the Nurrugon Mountain Range, on a wide stone ledge, some 3000 meters over the planet's surface.

"So, some Breen settled on this world at some point in history and now something they put here is emitting polaron pulses?" Seifer queried. "Given we are just beyond the outer reaches of their territory, they must've felt they could do anything, all willy-nilly."

Arlene smirked as she examined the pictographic carvings on the door. "Legend has it, a multi-generational class of Ancient Breen guardians called the Amaku Protectorate were to be whisked away to Heaven as reward for keeping their god safe in a holy icebox called the Amakun, but the warrior class of Breen got jealous of their brethren's success and disrupted said-ascent, sending them and it to who-knows-where. Possibly here."

"Except, we actually know nothing about the Breen and there is no proof that severely gossiped, likely-made-up story was ever one of their legends," Seifer criticized. "People just want it to be true so they can pretend they understand something they don't. Basically, Earth religion, if you don't count the Greek Gods, one of which Kirk instigated into predictable radical enlargement."

Veker, the science officer and Kelpien, added, "Also, the Breen near-demolished San Francisco eighteen years ago, so I posit an air of anti-suit-strapped suit-wearing sentiment."

BOK gestured to the elaborate door after he was done scanning with his gold Ferengi tricorder. "That may be, but you're in fact looking at proof of legend, Starfleet. According to my initial scans, this door dates back to over 3000 years and appears to describe that very group being brought here and securing the Amakun."

"Looks like they set up a codex of ancient, innovative review required to gain access," Arlene realized, while BOB copied BOK in scanning, and Arlene and Seifer approached a mysterious section of the stone door that platformed movable, grooved stone faces of Breen symbols, circling a centre keyhole. "We're finally here. Just think about how much their hidden artifact will be worth."

Seifer rolled his eyes. "Let me guess. Collector money?"

"Reward money," Arlene corrected. "And reputation." She shrugged innocently. "Being known is value in the bank, on top of bragging rights over an artifact of massive historical significance. How much of Starfleet actually knows about the *Phoenix-X*?"

The Commander blinked. "Some of the main ones. The *Enterprise-F*, I think?" Then he shook out of it. "Never mind that. Since, I'm assuming, scans and transporters can't penetrate this, we'll have to find someone who can read Breen."

*\*Click! Click! Chhrripp!\** popped a confident Zeta on all eight legs upon Arlene's shoulder. *\*Chhrripp! Click, click, cliiiiicckkk!\**

She gestured her head. "Zeta says it's describing events leading up to the expelling of the Protectorate, driven by a species-defining revolution. The movable symbols surrounding this entrance key are: *Mud, ship, velocity, body shell* and *algae*."

"Well, it has to be *velocity*," BOB interjected. "For most species, breaking the warp barrier and joining a vast, intergalactic community defines you and how you fit into something bigger than one, simple, basic civilization."

Everyone then watched as Zeta leapt onto the door and used his legs to reconfigure the stone face representing *velocity* into the keyhole. A resulting mechanism in the door then shot a series of fatal stone spikes at everyone, who all dodged, until one hit BOB in the shoulder.

"Augh!" BOB went flying along the ledge-floor, but got himself up before falling off the mountain. "So, not that."

Seifer snapped in realization. "It's the *body shell*. The Breen don't just need their suits, they wear it for some maddening, ritualistic purpose. For ancient peoples, need and myth were convergencies."

Everyone then watched as Zeta scurried and reconfigured *body shell* into the keyhole. Now, the mountain shook of stone-scraping and ancient cog mechanics, prompting the door to open and reveal a dug-in groove with a highly inscribed stone icebox at its centre: the Amakun.

"You did it!" Arlene guffawed, genuinely impressed. "You get my whole thing and stuff. Thanks, man."

Seifer jilted out of his shared shock. "I guess I did? This really is kind of rush for you, isn't it?" But, before his newfound partner could respond, the Amakun artifact started spewing out tendrils of organic algae-like matter, grabbing each person and tying them in place! The green matter then began to grow up and envelop each crewmember and android spider.

"Aghh! This is the opposite of success," BOB gritted, counter-reactively, but mostly to his alternate brother. "If you're doing so well as a

Ferengi, then why won't you indulge in our shared, tortuous past??"

BOK struggled in his own moving algae. "Because having common, terrible origins doesn't make us the same! Arlene doesn't go around looking for other Vau N'Akats to figure out her own likely inane providence!"

"It's true," Arlene deadpanned to the *Phoenix-X* away team. "After waking up in this era, mind-scattered from some unknown, massive, traumatic, all-gone-wrong time-travel expulsion, I opted for moving on rather than a season-long, needlessly, drawn-out investigation with annoying filler episodes. Ironic, considering my fascination with ancient history."

Seifer sighed. "Since we can't tap our commbadges and we're about to die, where did Zeta come from?"

"Built at Omicron Theta, decades ago, before hopping around between various bounty hunters," BOK explained. "We were all aimless before we chose our own destinies. The past isn't as important as to what it has led us to now."

Suddenly, a flock of triangle-shaped creatures, the Krin, flung out from the clouds and descended upon both away teams in waves of attack. The algae upon everyone had enveloped enough of them to protect all from sudden death.

"It's Krin: an invasive lower lifeform native to Covalence!" Veker yelled amongst the fluttering cacophony. "They have been known to tear people in their cloud migration path to shreds, like an overly excited Varon-T disruptor! Why did the Deferi even move here?"

Seifer wiggled an opening for his face during a break in the assault. "Of course! This Amakun artifact wasn't just a vessel for a god to be revered. Their god was physically shielding the Breen from predators. After the Breen changed to protect themselves with their body shells—the suits, I assume—the Protectorate's job was complete."

"Yes! And, because their ascension was halted, their god remained trapped inside it until he was able to emit those pulses and activate the clue!" Arlene realized along with Seifer. "By the way, *clue* is such an annoying generalization."

She then articulated her Vau N'Akat fretwork bracelet matter into an elaborate spike that extended out, fast, and pierced the Amakun artifact into three pieces, releasing the Amaku entity inside, as well as the algae tendrils around everyone else.

The non-corporeal energy that was Amaku then spread itself to disperse and knock out the Krin until the fluttering triangles were warded off and no longer a threat. The Amaku then reverted into a more condensed energy and hovered there, for a moment, in appreciation. "I am Commander Seifer of the Federation *Starship Phoenix-X*," the Trill opened in genuine, disbelief and awe.

"You're talking to a god-interpreted alien. They don't care for statesmanship," Arlene deadpanned in amusement. "Soo Bajoran Prophecy. But, I guess this one did care about the safety of us upper-lower-middle class life forms at one point. Especially, the Breen in whatever vulnerable state they were once in."

The group watched as the Amaku energy ascended into the sky, parting the clouds before disappearing forever. *\*Click!/?\**

"Zeta says he feels good about the whole thing," BOK translated as he began picking up the three pieces of the icebox. "But, without the entity, this thing will be worth half as much as we were projecting on selling."

Seifer turned to Arlene in pure, wide-eyed, unrelenting judgment. "I knew it!"

"Well, it's been a slice of Grade-A American pie, Commander, but we have an Independent Archaeologists Guild to haggle with," she acutely saluted as BOK was tapping his tricorder to activate the *Jade Fox's* transporters. "If that hack exploration/military hybrid never promotes you to Captain, come find me someday. I might like taking orders."

After they dematerialized, Tong called in from the orbiting *Phoenix-X*. "*Commander! The Jade Fox has just cloaked in fantastical, orchestral escape! Seriously, they played it on all hailing frequencies for that extra umph.*"

"Dammit. Now I have to report hacky surprise-paralysis coupled with spontaneous plot-contrivance," Seifer grumbled. "Well, at least we stopped the pulses and found this ancient door worth studying."

But BOB interrupted by loud shouting, pointing up at the sky. "The Krin are coming back! Aaahh! Duck and cover!" As they each leapt over the cliff edge and hung on, the massive flood of small triangle Krin swooped in, missing them and subsequently ate through the archaeologically prized stone Breen doors until the doors were barely recognizable.

"Soooo, did we come out of this with anything more than a lesson in circumspect team-ups with non-Starfleet groups?" Seifer queried as the Krin flew off and away and the three men got back to their feet.

Veker shrugged. "Well, you seemed to get along quite well with Arlene, if a lower-ranked hierarchal officer may presumptuously overstep his workplace boundaries with a superior officer?"

"You may," Seifer conceded. "Oh, forget it. Let's get out of here. The lesson is, all archaeology is a non-stop adrenalin-pumping adventure, laced with danger, divination and suspicion. A worthy academic pursuit for anyone physically fit enough take on the action of it all."

BOB and Veker nodded in agreement. "BOB to *Phoenix-X*. Three to beam up," he said as they were then dematerialized away from the destroyed ruins. Additional exploration of the Breen would have to wait for another, more questionable century.

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