

Star Beagle Adventures Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

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Star Beagle Adventures Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

by [LordRobertBruceScott](#)

Summary

The Beagle Task Force takes position to protect the newly founded colony of ASA 4...

Notes

Throughout this episode, snippets of lyrics are quoted. These are from the first movement of the song, “And You And I part I - Cord of Life“ by Bill Bruford, Chris Squire, Steve Howe, and Jon Anderson. The song first appeared as track 2 on Close to the Edge, the fifth album by the progressive rock band, YES, 1972, Atlantic Records.

Scene 1: A Moment's Answer



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 1: A Moment's Answer

A man conceived a moment's answer to the dream...

16.1

A Moment's Answer

Gan Baatar had been born and raised on the artificial planet, Cun Ling, in the burgeoning city of Ba Sing Se. He had never been to Earth, much less to Mongolia, where part of his ancestry lay. At a young age, he had moved to the planetary capital city, Trantor, and become an engineer with Nakamura Enterprises, where his theories about warp field modulation had led to the development of some of the U.S.S. Beagle's most advanced technology.

He was brilliant, hard working and at age 26, unmarried and rarely seen outside of his small office near the Beagle's engineering section. It was the Beagle's Dean of Ship, Sakura Nakamura Holland, who recommended Gan for the ASA 4 colony. He could easily continue his ground breaking work from an office on the planet, but Sakura was concerned that he was swiftly heading toward burnout.

Sakura had sent Gan ahead with the colonists on the U.S.S. Puppy. And instead of advanced computer equipment, she had given him a morin khuur. Gan had kept the instrument cased during the journey and had immersed himself in all of the tutorial programming that had come with it, managing to find a quiet corner first of the U.S.S. Puppy, then the U.S.S. Bluebird and had gone largely unnoticed among the colonists, who were dominated by a boisterous lot of tellarite biologists.

But the young engineer's reclusive ways could not keep him anonymous for even a few days in a colony of less than 40 people. Even in the 25th Century, colonization took physical effort. In no insignificant way, that was part of the point. Every colony had to get back to the basics of cultivation and society building that was the commonality among all humanoids.

Digging, planting, harvesting, foraging... all these things were culture shock enough to Gan. But doing so in the company of a dozen rowdy, rough-edged, snarky, insulting tellarites along with a small contingent of United States Marines who had grown accustomed to, fond of, and acculturated to these beastly aliens... that was the real culture shock.

"Yesterday, you had a grand total of 3 words for me," said the tiny, pink, slightly porcine and oddly cute tellarite, Norkaond Vef. "Let's see if you can break that record today..."

Gan flinched as a massive paw landed on his shoulder from behind. "You just have to get him talking about something that interests him." Even though Gan was a gangly 6'0", the massive and bear-like director of the Tellarite Biological Survey, Drisk javWalirsh, towered over him. "I have it on good authority that talkative here will bend your ear for hours about the finer points of advanced warp field theory."

Vef sidled up until she was almost touching Gan. The tellarites seemed to have no concept of personal space and would occasionally crowd in a group around their astonished human companions as if they were traveling in a cramped turbo-lift instead of strolling across an open landscape.

"Handsome here doesn't have to talk to be interesting," Vef crooned. "In fact, the nervous silent type here is a real..."

"So you have to show me this instrument you've been hiding in your hut. And you have to show it to me right now." Gan had been uncomfortable around Private First Class Guz Maxwell, but at this moment, the young marine had become a gift from heaven. Guz sidled up to Gan's left side, wrapped an arm around the young engineer's shoulders and firmly led him away from the tellarites.

"Hey!" Vef pouted, only to be met with her director's enormous laughter.

"Ha! Let him go, Norkie. You've been outbid." javWalirsh laughed again.

“He’d rather go boy-boy than try on an alien,” Vef pouted.

“Nope. It’s all about you, Norkie,” javWalirsh joked as he landed a paw on the tiny, pink tellarite’s head and mussed her tuft of white hair. “Go fix up your makeup and try another day.”

“We have got to get you fixed up or Norkie is going to eat you for lunch,” Guz said quietly. “And I happen to know a very lonely girl who’s been making goo-goo eyes at you, not that you’ve noticed.” Guz ushered Gan into his own hut. “Now I have an ear for music and you’re not just good. You’re making me feel inadequate. And I’m really good. Show me this thing.”

Instead of speaking, Gan picked up the instrument and displayed it, reverentially, to his savior.

“The top is Fender skinwood. The only place it grew was on Fender Marsh. You can’t get it now, since the jem’hadar destroyed the planet. The strings were produced by the foozies... I have no idea how. They still live in a few places. There’s a colony of them in Wakanda on Cun Ling.” Gan Baatar had not said this many words since arriving on Rattleroot Island on ASA 4.

Gan suddenly realized that the young man sitting across from him was one of the few people he knew who could be trusted handling a valuable instrument. He had seen Guz play electric guitar and was impressed with the young marine’s sensitivity. It was only the thought of Guz being attracted to men that had made Gan uncomfortable. It had not been a conscious thought, but now that it had occurred to him, it also occurred how silly it was. Gan took a breath, then gingerly handed the instrument to Guz, who handled the morin khuur with the same reverence.

“Gorgeous,” Guz observed, turning the instrument over and inspecting it closely. “The horse heads on the bridge-plate and the tuning head are hand-carved.” He looked more closely at the neck, then the soundbox and the soundboard. “It’s all hand carved. And assembled by hand.”

“The bow, too,” Gan said, holding up the bow for the instrument. Tiny horse heads were carved on both ends of the bow. “Mrs. Holland made it for me. By hand. She had sourced the materials for it shortly after she recruited me for this mission.”

Guz’s eyes widened, stunned at the emotional value of the instrument he was holding. “The mother-of-pearl characters inset into the neck...”

“Her signature,” Gan confirmed.

“How long have you been playing?” Guz asked.

“This is my first instrument,” Gan replied. “I’ve been singing the songs all my life, but never really singing them the way they’re supposed to be sung. Now that I can play them...”

“We need a bonfire. We need a feast. We need to bring people together and celebrate this place. You. You’re it. You’re what we’ve been looking for,” said Guz.

“What are you talking about?” Gan was completely confused.

“You. Your songs. Your voice. You’re the most natural musician I’ve ever heard and I’m really, really good. Phillip’s really good. So is Falok. Cetris Rye is an amazing singer. But there’s this natural wildness to your sound. Something primal that we really need.” Guz handed the morin khuur back to the young engineer.

“There’s a big confrontation with those holy landers coming. We’re going to be putting our lives on the line for those weird vulcan-human-mushroom-shrimp that are just now taking up orbit around this planet. We’ll be putting our lives on the line for those lizard-riding, gorilla-people who live pretty much everywhere on this planet except for this isolated little island.”

Guz took a breath. “We’re even going to try to protect those giants on ASA 2. And the holy landers outnumber us at least 15 to 1. We need something to bring everybody together. Something that will bring it all home what we’re fighting for. Why we’re standing guard over a star system thousands of lightyears from the Federation. And it’s all there in your songs. I’ve heard it. I’ve heard you singing. Someone needs to speak for the wilderness. You are the voice of the wilderness. We need to hear that voice.”



16.1

SBA Episode 16, Scene 2: All the Themes

Chapter Summary

Staying the flowers daily sensing all the themes...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 2: Daily Flowers

Staying the flowers daily sensing all the themes...

16.2

Daily Flowers

Private First Class Guz Maxwell set about organizing and preparing the bonfire celebration with the initiative, intelligence, ingenuity, diligence and grit befitting a United States Marine. His first stop, after convincing Gan Baatan to provide a concert for the event, was his C.O., Lance Corporal Petra Spitze. Guz caught up with Spike under an umbrella leaf tree in the full heat of midday.

Spike barely allowed her young charge to get two sentences into his clearly rehearsed sales pitch: “You’re asking the wrong person, Songbird. You need to take this request to the colonial governor.”

“But you’re the next in my chain of command,” PFC Maxwell replied, in some confusion.

“This is a civilian matter, Marine. You can wear your uniform while organizing it, but it is not a project for the U.S. Marine Corps,” Spike said shortly. “Take it up with the civilian government. Which consists entirely of the colonial governor.”

PFC Maxwell, like pretty much everyone else in the Beagle Task Force, was terrified of the newly appointed planetary governor of Al Salemais A 4. There was no office, no desk, no building, and no bureaucracy of any sort. Governor T’Eln, the former premiere of the Vulcan Science Academy and currently still serving as the director of Astrophysics and Stellar Cartography for the U.S.S. Beagle, was to be found wherever she felt she was needed.

For a vulcan well over 200 years, an age at which most vulcans were either dead or in dramatic decline due to advanced age, T’Eln was extremely active. Guz caught up with her deep in conversation with the denobulan planetologist, Cetris Rye, who was, in turn supervising a group of industrious tellarites working deep inside a newly dug well. A well that Guz and his fellow marines had helped the tellarites dig.

“...to enhance the natural filtration system already in place,” Cetris Rye was saying. “If we get this right, we will have a freshwater supply that will resupply itself with filtered seawater as fast as we tap water out of it. The hard part will not be overuse, it will be underuse. We will have to constantly run the freshwater back to the sea, which will give us the opportunity to use that water flow to clean the used filters. What we filter out of the seawater for our use will be filtered back into the water as we return it to the ocean.”

“Elegant,” T’Eln responded. “Is it sustainable?”

“We have Akri Dexe to thank for this system,” the denobulan planetologist responded. “The trill have been using this very simple, water-powered desalinization system for nearly 300 years. No added power needed.”

The ancient vulcan planetary governor nodded sagely, concluding her conversation just as a mud-caked tellarite crawled out of the well to ask the denobulan planetologist a question. She turned toward the young human with all the warmth of a freezer door opening.

“Private First Class Guz Maxwell, how may I be of service?”

Like everyone else when fixed with that cold, emotionless gaze, Guz froze for a second. Then the plan for an opening ceremony, filled with song from the ancient Mongol civilization, came tumbling out of him. In the face of the ancient vulcan’s silence, Guz trotted out every

argument in favor of the celebration that he could think of. Finally, after several extremely anxious minutes, Guz ran out of words.

“Your idea is not well defined, your presentation is extremely disorganized and your justifications are entirely illogical,” Governor T’Eln said. “Approved.”

Guz drew a breath, but his rebuttal failed to make it out of his mouth. All he could say was: “Approved?”

“Would you prefer a different answer?” T’Eln asked.

“Um... No... No, ma’aam,” Guz stammered. “Um... Thank you?”

“You are a United States Marine,” the elderly vulcan observed. “You are trained and conditioned to carry out each task with foresight and precision. Your comrades speak well of your abilities. And this ceremony of yours may be of great use to me. My only condition is that you allow me to set the date. If I understand Captain Howard’s purposes, we may have guests.”

SBA Episode 16, Scene 3: Foundation

Chapter Summary

As a foundation left to create this spiral aim...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 3: Foundation

As a foundation left to create this spiral aim...

16.3 Foundation

As the U.S.S. Mako took up orbit around ASA 4, first John Jr., then Stephanie Jr., then the rest of the children of Ensign John Sevorik, Stephanie the Space Shrimp and Rocky the Lepreshroom, disengaged from the U.S.S. Escort's severed nacelles, leaving enormous gouges in the separated drive components. They appeared to be irreparably damaged.

Commodore Yui Song found herself in an odd conversation with John Jr., who was the unelected, but uncontested leader of this small group of aliens who had been born in another galaxy less than a month ago. The conversation was made far odder due to the intergalactic alien's strong West Texas accent.

The odd alien was floating in space, his legs embedded in the rocky top of what Escort's crew had described as a landthorn, inside of which grew a sort of inter-dimensional mushroom that was at once closely related to John Jr. and provided him sustenance, atmosphere, and the ability to travel independently at warp. He had been given communication equipment, which allowed him to see and hear, and be seen and heard. His oddly misshapen head, complete with pointed ears, arched eyebrows, and a giant purple Mohawk, dominated the main viewer on the Mako's bridge.

"We appreciate your offer of weaponry, Commodore," John Jr. drawled. "But it would be of little use to us. We have our own natural self-defense mechanisms. I very much hope we don't need to put ourselves at risk that way."

"The first of the holy landers will be here in 23 days," Yui replied. "Captain Howard will join us in just over 8 days. He is hopeful that we can come to a diplomatic understanding with the holy landers. It looks like they have at least 28 ships headed this way, so if they are determined to meet us with violence, things will go very badly for us. Help is on the way for us, but we cannot expect relief to arrive for at least 45 days."

"Have you made contact with the people of ASA 4?" John Jr. asked.

"We are prohibited from doing so by our laws," Yui replied.

"We are not, but entry into a planetary atmosphere would be difficult and dangerous for us," John Jr. replied. "Still, I think it odd that you have established a colony on a planet, the intelligent inhabitants of which you are legally prohibited from asking for permission."

"We do things like that," opined Commander Rhonda Carter, drawing a sour look from the commodore for her effort. "Typically, we call them science stations and use them primarily to research the evolving intelligent species. And we list the planet as a protectorate of the Federation. We don't have that luxury in this place because we're so far from home. So instead we're calling it a colony and have actual colonists on the way to take the place of our people."

While Commodore Yui was nonplussed with Carter's frankness, John Jr. seemed grateful for it. "Thank you, Rhonda, for your frank explanation. Your reputation for honesty and directness among us is well earned. It strikes me that the holy landers could take advantage of your legal restriction. If they were to make first contact with the people of ASA 4 and advise them of your colony, it would not seem to those people that your purpose is to protect them. The holy landers would become their apparent protectors. And you, their apparent exploiters."

"That's some rather fine reasoning for a creature who is only a few weeks old," Yui mused.

“I don’t have my father’s memories,” John Jr. drawled. “But I have increasing access to his knowledge.”

“You have his face, his voice, even his accent,” Carter said.

The odd alien smiled. “I am not certain why, but that pleases me.”

Pel, who had remained silent up to this point, spoke up. “John Jr., would you allow me to visit you on your... um... in your environment? I would like to review your technology needs. I think they may be far more extensive than you might imagine. But I would prefer to do that in person.”

“I would be delighted,” John Jr. replied.

The small ferengi turned toward Yui. “Song, could I borrow my ship for this visit?”

Yui Song had become fond of Pel, and had found her quite useful. “According to the terms of our lease, I would need to assign a Star Fleet pilot...”

Pel turned her gaze toward Commander Carter. “Rhonda, would you care to fly me out there?”

"I'll take any excuse to visit my godson," Carter replied.

SBA Episode 16, Scene 4: A Movement

Chapter Summary

A movement regained and regarded both the same...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 4: A Movement

A movement regained and regarded both the same...

16.4 A Movement

There were three suns in the evening sky. The two smaller suns, just bright stars that were very close together, actually, could only be seen in the eastern sky because Ul was westering and would set within the hour.

In the warm, shallow water just off the Weifli south shore, Professor Newellewell reclined in a sea chair, letting the waves wash over his belly. He had become an islander and islanders were considered (by those few people who knew there was such a thing) to be backward, ignorant and lazy. “Well, I’ll take that last one,” Newellewell said to no one.

Something tickled his left hand. Newellewell tickled back as he fished around with his right hand and found a large, porous bag just under his sea chair. It was only a second later that the animal tickling his left hand took his entire left hand in its mouth and tried to bite it off. But Newellewell was a gorian, not a jellworm and the sea mole’s fleshy teeth weren’t strong enough to break his skin. The aging professor of gorianthropology easily lifted the animal out of the water, stuffed it in the bag and tied the bag under his sea chair.

“And there’s dinner and breakfast,” he said, again to no one. “Just like yesterday, and the day before, and the day before. Good thing I like the taste of roasted sea mole. Sorry buddy,” he added, patting the wriggling bag tied under his chair.

The aging gorianthropology professor was about to get out of his chair when something in the sky caught his eye. He watched with growing anticipation.

Long ago, another race had become intelligent, then advanced enough to leave Beidth and achieve orbit. The same Beidth that had given birth to Newellewell and all his people. Even now, hundreds of thousands of years later, their technology occasionally fell from the sky and crashed into pieces on the ground, occasionally destroying buildings, sometimes killing people, and even more rarely, leaving some clues about their remarkable technology.

And gorian culture had leapt ahead as a result. The people of the northern plains had gone from harnessing fire to harnessing sidle drakes to massive cities and transportation networks powered by highly advanced battery packs, themselves charged by chemical interactions that could only be conducted in high security facilities far from any population centers.

And these facilities occasionally exploded, leaving entire areas uninhabitable.

The thing falling from the sky was definitely getting bigger, but, impossibly, it was slowing. It had a parachute.

Newellewell got up out of his sea chair and walked toward the shore where the object seemed to be falling. He suddenly turned and ran back to his chair, grabbed the bag with the sea mole, then ran back toward his shack, where a large box was landing. Right in his front yard.

More surprisingly, the parachute was sucked into the box. Then the dark gray front of the box suddenly came alive, displaying the face of what was clearly an alien. Not one of the ancients - those people didn’t look like people at all. This one had a face. But not a proper face. A weird, misshapen face.

“Hello Professor Newellewell,” the alien said. “My name is John Jr. and I just moved into the neighborhood. And I’m not the only one. All my siblings are in orbit.”

“Do they all look like you?” The aging professor pulled up a chair and a table and proceeded to slaughter and fillet his dinner.

“None of them do,” John Jr. responded from the viewscreen. “But we all live in orbit and cannot safely come down to visit you.”

“So what, exactly, are you?”

“I don’t really know. We’re new. We were only born a few dozen days ago.”

Newellewell started cooking the fillets. “Were you born in orbit?”

“We came from a very distant place. Other people brought us.”

“Other aliens?” the elderly professor asked around a mouth full of roasted sea mole.

“Lots of different ones,” John Jr. replied. “I guess it seems normal to me. I was born in their midst. They’re from several different worlds. And they work together as if they’re just one people. And it all seems normal to me, but it’s far from normal to you.”

Newellewell swallowed and began putting the rest of his food away. “I’d like to meet them.”

“I think you should,” John Jr. replied.

“Can they come down onto this planet?”

“They already have.”

SBA Episode 16, Scene 5: Seeds of Life

Chapter Summary

All complete in the sight of seeds of life with you...



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Scene 5: Seeds of Life

All complete in the sight of seeds of life with you...

16.5 Seeds of Life

“What is that?”

To her credit, Commodore Yui Song had summoned Commander Rhonda Carter and Pel to her ready room just off the bridge of the U.S.S. Mako before blowing her stack.

The current object of her ire was displayed on the viewscreen on the wall of her ready room - the communications cube that John Jr. had sent to Professor Newellewell.

“Pel, did you provide this communication device to John Jr. or any of his siblings?” Yui continued.

“I did not,” the minuscule ferengi responded. “It is a device of his own manufacture.”

“Computer, replay tracking surveillance from 952.25 through 955.12.” Yui Song did not need to address the computer directly. She could simply have given the order and the computer would have understood it from context, but she had been a Star Fleet officer for a very long time and was accustomed to that formula from her decades of service.

The computer duly displayed the landing sequence and the retraction of the very large landing parachute into the device.

The commodore regarded both Pel and Carter with incredulity. “Just how was that community of mushroom-riding space-shrimp capable of building such a device?”

“You might want to recall their human and vulcan heritage,” Pel responded evenly. “I did not witness the construction of the device, however there is a lot of orbital debris, including a number of nearly functional satellites. I would surmise that they salvaged the necessary components.”

“And fashioned that thing with what tools?” Commodore Yui asked.

“Ah, well,” Pel took a breath. “I provided them a few basic tool kits. I used Lieutenant Salgado’s field tool kits as a guide. In all fairness, you were prepared to offer them some fairly advanced weaponry. Maintenance of those weapons would have required an even more extensive set of tools.”

“John Jr. rejected our offer of weapons,” Yui observed.

“But not the offer of assistive technology,” Carter opined. “We had offered a help package before you made the offer of weaponry.”

“And at the time, John Jr. said he did not know what tools we could provide that they might need,” Yui retorted.

“Which was an invitation to provide a presentation,” said Pel. “Not a rejection of assistance. But there’s something you’re not taking into account.”

Commodore Yui turned her attention to Pel. The ferengi was not a subordinate, but a consultant, the commodore reminded herself. She took that moment to calm herself.

“Several things, actually,” Rhonda Carter added.

“John Jr. and his siblings could be considered allies, but you have not established a formal alliance with them,” said Pel. “They are not members of the Federation and not bounded by any of your rules or laws. We are well over a thousand lightyears from the Federation and this place, is now their home. Colony or no colony, we are the visitors here. John Jr. and his siblings are the most socially and technologically advanced of the native populations in the ASA system.”

“I don’t think you have an adequate understanding of their abilities,” Carter added. “When I first met John Jr. and the others, they were essentially children. I’ve been talking with them every day since then and their intelligence has grown almost exponentially. I realized, maybe only a week ago, that they had already surpassed human intelligence potential and were having to think about how to explain things to me in ways I could understand. I had been their teacher. They became my teachers. They’re well beyond that now and I don’t think they’re anywhere near reaching their potential.”

Carter pointed at the viewscreen that was displaying the communication device sitting on the sand of Weifli Island. “Building that thing was child’s play for John Jr. We gave them the tools less than 12 hours before that thing landed. At this moment, my godchildren are gathering all the orbital debris over ASA 4 and helping us build the defensive installation that Krank designed. Before that installation is complete, they will have built more than 60% of it. And we don’t just have Star Fleet personnel working on Fortress Escort, we have a lot of engineers from Nakamura Enterprises, some of the best engineers humanity has to offer. They’re going to end up learning new problem solving techniques from John Jr., Steph Jr. and the others.”

Commodore Yui took a few moments to digest this information. Then: “Okay Commander. What is your point?”

It was the ferengi consultant who answered. “I think you might have dismissed John Jr.’s concern about first contact with the gorians. When he made his observation, he was already several times smarter than you, me and any two other people on this ship together. That intelligence has at least doubled since then. The godchildren communicate telepathically, sharing their problem analysis and resolution at speeds well beyond anyone on either of our ships.”

“Commodore,” said Commander Rhonda Carter. “We came to this place debating among ourselves how much protection we owe to my godchildren. We were debating how much assistance we should provide for them. How long we were obligated to put our lives on the line for them.”

Carter paused dramatically, then: “Now they’re having those debates about how much effort they should put into assisting and protecting us.”

SBA Episode 16, Scene 6: Sight of Sound

Chapter Summary

Changed only for a sight of sound the space agreed...



The Star Beagle Adventures

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Scene 6: Sight of Sound

Changed only for a sight of sound the space agreed...

16.6 Sight of Sound

“The holy landers have slowed their approach.”

This time Captain Ronald Howard, XIV was in Commodore Yui Song’s executive conference room instead of being a holographic presence on the U.S.S. Mako’s holodeck. The U.S.S. Beagle had just arrived and deployed all of its support craft to assist with the disassembly and dissemination of the U.S.S. Escort to build a defensive installation in orbit of ASA 4.

The command group meeting was no longer a table full of experts, but an exclusive group of the key leaders of the task force: Commodore Yui, Captain Howard, Commander Rhonda Carter, ASA 4 Colonial Governor T’Eln, and three key consultants: General Krank, Pel, and the genetically modified purple, Shadow.

To their physical presence, another key leader was present on the viewscreen: the elder and leader among the children of Ensign John Sevorg, John Jr. The slowing of the approaching holy lander fleet was his observation. “At their current rate of speed, they will not arrive for another 36 of your days.”

For the first time in a very long time, Yui Song let out a long, heavy sigh of relief and smiled. She dropped her fist to the table three times. “Yes!”

“I had wondered how long they could run their engines so far above the tolerances we estimated based on that wrecked ship we examined back on Mt. Torlochter,” said Skip Howard.

“They might simply have run out of throat lozenges,” Rhonda Carter quipped.

“The revised time schedule seems quite significant to you, Commodore Yui,” John Jr. observed. “You anticipate reinforcement.”

“Rhonda keeps telling me you’re a smart one,” Yui responded. “Yes, I can now report that Captain Phillip Phlox should join us in about 40 days, commanding the U.S.S. Citadel.”

Rhonda Carter reacted with surprise. “Citadel? That’s Vice Admiral Ho’s flagship. Where is the vice admiral?”

“Undisclosed,” said Yui.

“Phil Phlox?” Howard asked. “I thought he retired from Star Fleet more than 100 years ago.

“He’s back,” Yui replied.

“Why?”

“Undisclosed.”

Captain Howard made an amused noise. “You’re enjoying this a bit too much.”

“Allow an old woman her pleasures,” Yui retorted.

John Jr. had watched this discussion with mild bemusement. “We will still have two days from the time the holy landers arrive until the ship you are referring to arrives.”

“A day of preparation and a day of celebration,” Howard responded. “I have every hope that we can talk the holy landers into at least those rituals before they take action. It will be much easier to fill two days with ritual than two weeks.”

“Are you not concerned that the arrival of your fellow Federations might cause these holy landers to think themselves betrayed?” John Jr. seemed more curious than concerned.

“Just more layers of ritual,” Howard replied. “I don’t even have to invent those rituals. Star Fleet policy and procedure for first contact situations can take over at that point.” He gestured to Commodore Yui Song, who seemed content to allow her subordinate to talk out and think out this process.

“And what of the gorians?” John Jr. asked.

“Well, you’ve made first contact, so by Federation law, the prohibitions against making first contact under the Prime Directive no longer apply.” Skip Howard smiled. “So I guess I’m just going to have to go down and talk to one Professor Newellewell...”

SBA Episode 16, Scene 7: The Face of Need

Chapter Summary

Between the picture of time behind the face of need...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 7: The Face of Need

Between the picture of time behind the face of need...

16.7 The Face of Need

“Washington...”

Captain Ronald Howard, XIV and his honor guard were the first humans to meet a gorian face-to-face. The colonists had dubbed these people “lizard-riding gorilla-people.” The very large creatures these people rode looked very much like a cross between an iguana and a Clydesdale. But the people themselves, to Howard’s eye, looked far less like gorillas and more like a blend of a fully bipedal American Pit Bulldog with some sort of cartoon devil, complete with short, stubby horns and a long, whip-like tail.

They came in several colors. The specimen charging at full tilt toward Howard was bright red with black-in-red-in-black eyes. His head was up, his body oddly erect, and he was rapidly beating his chest. He wore only a pair of banana-yellow swim-trunks.

Only a moment before this odd creature hurled itself into the air at the captain of the U.S.S. Beagle, Private First Class Elven Washington interposed himself between Howard and the charging gorian. The gorian was only slightly larger than a pit bull - about 4’ tall and about 130 pounds.

Elven Washington was the largest of the U.S. Marine contingent assigned to the U.S.S. Beagle - 6’8” and 340 pounds of lean muscle.

The charging gorian bounced off the enormous African American and bounced twice on the sand before performing a reverse summersault and ending up on his feet, tail whipping.

The strange alien straightened and brushed sand off the short fur on his chest, then off his swim trunks. He shook his head a few times.

“They certainly made you folk big and tough! Welcome to Newellewell island! My little corner of nowhere. Thank you for honoring our traditional greeting ritual.”

Captain Howard stepped out from behind the massive marine, reached up to pat his massive shoulder. “Thank you, Private. You are unharmed?”

In response, Elven Washington patted his massive hands around his chest and stomach, from which their host had ricocheted, “Everything is in good order, sir,”

Howard chuckled, then quickly closed his mouth as he noticed the gorian shrinking back.

“My apologies, Professor. I understand that baring of the teeth has a very different meaning for your people than it does for ours. For us, most of the time when we bare our teeth we are smiling, which is an expression that signals amusement, merriment and pleasure. I understand for your people it would be interpreted as aggression and can be considered threatening.”

“From what John Jr. told me, we will have many, many cultural dissimilarities,” Professor Newellewell responded. “So much so that it might be unfortunate that we are physically so similar. Similarities neither of us, apparently, share with the aliens who are coming?”

“The holy landers,” Howard replied. He looked about on the beach. It took a few moments for him to find what he was looking for.

Newellewell watched with interest as Captain Skip Howard walked toward the surf, then followed as Howard signaled him. An animal about the size of his hand was skittering just ahead of the cascading waters, searching the sands just as the water washed back across it.

“I wouldn’t touch that,” Newellewell advised. “They aren’t interested in anything larger than your thumb, but they have a really nasty bite.”

“What do you call these?” Howard asked.

“Ulanths,” the retired gorian professor replied.

“Okay, imagine one of these, but about this tall...” Skip Howard held his hand as high up as he could reach. “With three eyes, three antennae, three hands and sometimes it walks on two legs, sometimes on four and sometimes on six. Covered with natural body armor, kind of like the ulant, but also has a stinger.”

“So these holy landers don’t look much like an ulant at all,” Newellewell observed.

Howard made an amused noise without smiling. “Yeah, but they look a lot more like one of those than they look like either of us.”

“John Jr. told me that your people are here to protect us from these holy landers.”

Skip Howard nodded. “They sing. And they tune their singing to find out which series of vibrations can override the independent thought of intelligent species so that they can broadly control them. They have done it to our people. And to many other people in this general region of space. We’re here to prevent them from enslaving your people.”

“Why?” Newellewell’s red eyes gleamed with strong emotion.

Skip Howard gave a resigned sigh. “We needed a place to protect John Jr. and his siblings from them and this was the only system available to us. So we’re responsible for leading those holy landers to your doorstep.”

“You misunderstand my question, Captain Ronald Howard the fourteenth. What makes you think we wouldn’t prefer to be enslaved by these holy landers?”

SBA Episode 16, Scene 8: Coming Quickly to Terms

Chapter Summary

Coming quickly to terms of all expression laid...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 8: Coming Quickly to Terms

Coming quickly to terms of all expression laid...

16.8

Coming Quickly to Terms

“My entire reason for moving out here was to retire...”

Professor Newellewell raked his claws through the short, crimson fur on his chest, then combed his face and rubbed the base of his short, stubby horns. He stamped his feet briefly, then resumed pacing, his long, thin tail whipping restlessly. He had never given a seminar to such a large, not to mention diverse group.

It was nothing short of bizarre... The enormous John Jr., or, more accurately, the enormous head of John Jr., was represented on the large communication device that he had dropped onto Newellewell's beach. The device, a black cube about a meter per side, now sat on top of one end of a long, low, stone table, about which a large number of chairs were arranged. The chairs were borrowed from the U.S.S. Mako's conference room. The table and the communication block were gifts. Useful enough gifts to make up for the time and trouble needed for the retired professor to provide an orientation to this vast collection of aliens about the various intelligent species inhabiting the three habitable planets orbiting the ASA star.

Newellewell's students included Captain Ronald Howard, XIV, Dean Sakura Nakamura Holland, Commander Rhonda Carter, Governor T'Eln, U.S. Marine Captain Osollaa sh'Zhiathis, the ferengi trader and now consultant Pel, the escaped purple secret agent Shadow, the enormous tellarite biologist Drisk javWalirsh, the trill oceanographer Akri Dexe, the denobulan planetologist Cetris Rye and the vrish diplomat Erok Gruex.

And, on screen, oddest of all, the son of the deceased Ensign John Sevork, John Jr., whose ancestry straddled three galaxies and included vulcan, human, some sort of giant space shrimp and some sort of transdimensional, spacebound mushroom.

Newellewell took his place at the opposite end of the table, which was next to his simple cooker, opened a bag and plopped a breathing, wheezing sea mole onto the end of the table. To the dismay of some at the table and intense interest of others, the gorian professor took out a large knife and slaughtered the creature and started butchering it. He held up the head, which consisted of a loose mouth surrounded by four eyes and twelve tentacles.

“Something on the order of a million years ago, a sea creature, fairly closely related to this sea mole, living in this very ocean, became intelligent and started to develop technology. They were able to use their own excretions to create protective armor for themselves and eventually, using this same technology, fashioned communications devices, the core elements for industrial technology and eventually space ships out of their own excrement. My people call them the old gods. I call them the tinkers.”

The small, horned professor began roasting the slaughtered pieces of the sea mole.

“The tinkers became very interested in genetic manipulation. They had taken my ancestors, forest dwelling creatures even smaller than this sea mole, and adopted them as pets. And they experimented, increasing the intelligence of their pets. These primitive gorians were far from their only pets. On these three worlds, there are at least 19 different species that could have an intelligent conversation with you. And my people are far from the smartest among them.”

“Not all of them could sit around this table with you. Some of them are plants. Aquatic plants.” The professor took his seat at the head of the table and started to eat the sea mole. “Some of them would rather eat you than talk to you,” he said around a mouthful of roasted sea mole.

“The braptors of Brail, the planet you refer to as ASA 2, are among those. Their ancestors used to fly. The tinkers made them larger and much, much smarter. There was a population of them in the southern reaches on this planet. We eventually wiped them out. Not before they had eaten several thousand of us. They were a lot smarter than us. We only survived because we vastly outnumbered them and could survive in a much wider range of environments.”

“And some of them, the moment they encounter you, would probably flatten themselves to the ground and worship you. My people are like that. Not me, mind you. But my people see gods everywhere. A few thousand of them willingly sacrificed themselves to be eaten alive by the braptors under the assumption that they were gods. And nearly all of my people think that our intelligence, rudimentary as it is, is a gift from the old gods.” Newellewell sneered.

The ruddy professor finished his meal, sat back in his chair, stared up into the evening sky and fell silent. His eclectic collection of students were treated to the sounds of the waves lapping on the beach nearby. Then to a long, loud, and rather heady belch. Professor Newellewell leaned his head back and gurgled, almost as if he were juggling his dinner in his throat, then sighed heavily. His eyes closed sleepily.

“So the intelligence of your people was not a gift?” prodded Captain Skip Howard.

“Hmmm?” Newellewell seemed more than mildly confused. He sat up, shook his head slowly and grunted unhappily.

“No. No, the tinkers weren’t handing out intelligence to all these species out of kindness. Nor was it some sort of ennui or general curiosity. They weren’t being deliberately cruel, nor were they acting out of whimsey. They had a PURPOSE!” Newellewell shouted this last word and it became obvious that his opinion was part of some long-running argument he had been pursuing for many long years.

“They experimented on us for thousands of years, and then used what they learned on themselves. They are gods because they fashioned themselves into gods.” He pointed a short, stubby, red-furred, clawed finger at the ancient vulcan who had become the colonial governor. “So you want to colonize this planet. Fine with me! But you need to understand the risk.”

He got up, then stood in his chair, then clambered onto the table and walked over to look down on the emotionless vulcan, his claw almost touching her forehead. His voice dropped and became very quiet. “The old gods are still here. And by establishing your colony here, you have volunteered yourselves and your descendants to be their next experimental subjects.”

SBA Episode 16, Scene 9: The Ocean Maid

Chapter Summary

Emotions revealed as the ocean maid...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 9: The Ocean Maid

Emotions revealed as the ocean maid...

16.9

The Ocean Maid

“You will have to create a permission structure...”

Private First Class Raanda Habib had developed a huge crush on Gan Baatar. She had lived on the U.S.S. Beagle for nearly a year and never known the young engineer for Nakamura Enterprises existed, much less that his study carol, where he spent nearly all of his time, was located 1 deck below the briefing room where she and her squad spent a lot of theirs. They had travelled in entirely different circles, completely unaware of each other, often only separated by a few feet of deck plating.

“What kind of structure?”

Raanda had never seduced a man before. Like so many beautiful, but exceptionally shy young women, she had never needed to. She had been swept off her feet by charming men. But that had been some time ago. Her first love was a soldier returned from the front lines, who, she had found out later, had a pregnant girlfriend waiting for him. And her rebound lover had been a charming and capable older man, who turned out to be married.

Now she found herself desperately wanting to charm a young man who was far more painfully shy than she was. In desperation, she had turned to someone she knew who had a lot of experience with men - her squad-mate, PFC Guz Maxwell.

“Snuggle up against him, put his hand on your breast and let nature take its course,” Guz had said with some humor. When this seemed to cause some internal panic within Raanda, Guz followed it up. “You know, that trill siren, Akri Dexe, has had her eye on him. She would have seduced him by now, but I told her in no uncertain terms to back off.”

Raanda had laughed at that. “Like she would be afraid of you.”

“She damn well better be,” Guz had replied with a small amount of heat. “She knows quite well I could make a lot of trouble for her. Kiss off a twink at your own risk. But she’s only going to hold off so long, so you have got to make your move.”

Raanda had been overcome with a powerful sigh. “I just don’t know how to do that.”

Guz had rolled his eyes at this. “He likes you. He knows you like him. Just march into his little hut, let him play a song for you, only one, then tell him to case his instrument and lay down. Snuggle up, and give him permission to take the lead. I know you’re painfully shy, but you’re by far the stronger of the two of you. Get up, go in there and do it right now, before you have time to talk yourself out of it.”

And Raanda, gamely enough, had gotten up to do exactly that.

“Raanda...”

She had stopped for only a moment.

“When he’s on top of you, you’re going to have to use your hands to guide him in. He’s never going to find his way in on his own.”

Raanda had been glad she had not turned to look at Guz when he said that. His words had her blushing violently.

Just as she was blushing wildly now, recalling this conversation. Guz Maxwell had, of course, been right. Raanda had found herself calming Gan again and again. He had been so nervous, so desperate to please, alternately too hesitant and too eager. But in the end, she had to admit, she was far more satisfied than she had ever been by her first two lovers. There was certainly no pregnant girlfriend or hidden wife waiting for Gan. Raanda had asked. And by asking, had made him feel so much more relaxed.

He didn’t even snore or drool in his sleep. His lean, muscular body was sprawled partly across her. His face, lower arms and lower legs were darkly tanned. The rest of his body was nearly milk white, having rarely seen sunlight. She found herself wondering how he had managed to stay so fit when he, reportedly, spent most of his time studying and developing his mind-bending theories about warp field theory and advanced applications that the U.S.S. Beagle’s vulcan-made warp drive architecture could make possible.

It only gradually dawned on Raanda how badly she had been hurt by the only other two men in her life. She had been largely thinking about her own wants and needs in this encounter. And now she had taken the virginity of someone even more painfully shy than she had been when she had lost hers. Some of the elation and satisfaction started to give way to a sense of tremendous responsibility. As badly hurt as she had been, Gan was so much more vulnerable than she had been.

It wasn’t cold in this hut and Gan’s body was warm next to hers. But Raanda felt a cold chill and began to shiver just a little as she began to understand that she was in way over her head. And she had no idea what to do next.

Outside Gan Baatan’s hut the stars wheeled overhead. The brightest star in the sky was ASC, A bright dime of light that provided some illumination to the beach and the receding tide. Bright enough to shine on a very large, dark body silently slithering back down off the beach and slipping back under the waves.

SBA Episode 16, Scene 10: Complete Sight

Chapter Summary

All complete in the sight of seeds of life with you...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 10: Complete Sight

All complete in the sight of seeds of life with you...

16.10 Complete Sight

“Dutchie had learned a lesson when the tongue-fish attacked Pichilemu Beach.”

Captain Ronald Howard, XIV, was, once again, hosting Commodore Yui Song, Commander Rhonda Carter and several other task force leaders in the U.S.S. Beagle’s conference room. A function of the ship’s holo-transporter had transformed the top of the conference table into a miniature representation of the beach of the ASA 4 colony on Rattleroot Island. The Beagle’s captain held a long conductor’s baton and was using it to point to a section of the beach.

“Our sensors didn’t pick up the tongue-fish until they beached. But Dutchie was able to reprogram the sensors to identify underwater displacement by moving bodies. And last night, we picked up such a displacement on the western shore of Rattleroot Island. Watch closely, right here.”

Skip Howard lightly tapped a portion of the beach.

“What is that?” Commodore Yui Song was the first to have noticed it.

“Something is cloaking itself,” Shadow observed.

“Very effective camouflage,” remarked Akri Dext, the trill oceanographer. “I can see it changing colors to match its background.” She paused, then: “It is very intelligent.”

“So you noticed the angle of the camouflage?” Howard asked.

“It is trying to camouflage itself against multiple observers viewing it from different angles,” Dext observed. “It can’t really do it, so it briefly becomes visible.”

Skip Howard used the conductor’s baton to point to one part of the creature, almost exactly on top of it. “This is the angle of observation from the U.S.S. Mako and the various pieces of the U.S.S. Escort in orbit.” He tapped lightly to the side of the creature. “And here’s the angle of observation from the U.S.S. Beagle. It’s smart enough to know that it’s being observed from two different orbits. What it doesn’t know is which ship has the more powerful sensors.

“That’s my hut,” said Akri Dext as the creature appeared to circle one of the huts near the beach. It paused for several moments, becoming almost completely invisible, then moved again toward another of the huts. Even though this was a recording of events that had happened hours earlier, all the people in the conference room found themselves holding their breath as Lance Corporal Petra Spitz walked past the creature without seeing it, then stopped and sniffed the air. Spike evidently had noticed a strange smell, but was unable to find its source and eventually returned to her patrol as Private First Class Sasha Soko joined her.

“Whose hut is that?” asked Dean Sakura Nakamura Holland. The creature had passed a number of huts, but found another interesting.

“Gan Baatan,” Akri Dext replied. “A young marine was in there with him last night. Raanda Habib.”

“And who was with you in your hut?” Howard asked.

“Drisk javWalirsh,” Dexe replied evenly. “He’s a beast. Do you think that was what this creature was interested in?”

“Casual relationships do not always imply causal relationships,” Howard responded. “But it does make an interesting hypothesis.”

Commodore Yui Song had watched this holographic simulation with combined interest and concern. “Just how big is that thing?”

“About twice the size of a bull elephant,” said Howard. “Want a glimpse of what this thing looks like? This is based on all the readings we took and should be a reasonable representation...”

“Let’s have a look,” Yui said.

The details of the beach cleared and the simulation of the camouflaged creature grew. As it dragged itself along the beach on a series of tentacles, one part, then another of its body turned to a solid greenish gray. It was able to roll and pirouette on its twelve tentacles, moving with a grace and speed that seemed impossible given its bulk. Its skin looked rubbery and tough. Four red-rimmed, independently operating eyes surrounded its mouth and were themselves surrounded by the twelve tentacles.

It was unfair, given this was the first contact the task force had with this creature, but it looked ominous, powerful, frightening. There was a coldness and calculating grace to its movements.

“Great,” muttered Commander Rhonda Carter.

All eyes in the conference room turned from the simulation to look at the blue-haired commander of what had become known as Fortress Escort.

Carter sighed heavily. “Isn’t anyone else getting tired of this? We drag my godchildren into this system and they start developing god-like intelligence. We set up a colony to try to protect a population of worshipful demon dogs from a bunch of holier-than-thou ants who want nothing more than to be worshipped...”

She pointed at the holographic representation of the camouflaged visitor to the colony:

“And as if that wasn't enough, Cthulhu decides to show up.”

"Cthulhu?" asked Pel.

Commodore Yui Song waived a dismissive hand. "20th Century Earth literature." She turned toward Carter. "I didn't know you were a fan."

"I'm not." Carter replied.

SBA Episode 16, Scene 11 - Coins and Crosses

Chapter Summary

Coins and crosses never know their fruitless worth...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 11: Coins and Crosses

Coins and crosses never know their fruitless worth ...

16.11

Coins and Crosses

In the year he had been assigned to the U.S.S. Beagle, Private First Class Guz Maxwell had never set foot on the bridge. Being called to the Captain's office was something akin to being called to the principal's office, only far more nerve-wracking. Maxwell felt a certain kinship with the Beagle's oddly ostentatious captain. At the same time, he had always felt intimidated by the man. There was some steel and a lot of authority behind that smile. Captain Ronald Howard, XIV was the scariest friendly guy Maxwell had ever met.

As he stepped onto the bridge, Guz Maxwell found himself in a room laid out in an equilateral triangle with no doors. He turned to look at the wall from which he had just entered. The entire wall was a viewscreen with no hint of a door. As were the other two. He turned back to see the recently reassigned Lieutenant Commander Gregg Clark sitting just a bit too regally on the ornate captain's throne. Maxwell only knew Clark by reputation – that being that the man was unusually smart. A fitting first officer for the man who was rumored to be the smartest captain in the fleet.

All that just made Maxwell even more apprehensive. Clark had turned his chair toward the young marine and was just looking at him.

Fortunately, there was a formula for this kind of interaction. PFC Maxwell came to attention and saluted. "Private First Class Guz Maxwell, reporting as ordered, sir."

Lt. Commander Clark smiled, turned his chair to face the starboard port monitor and gestured with his right hand to the forward corner directly opposite the wall through which Maxwell had entered.

Maxwell waited a heartbeat, then, aware that saluting was not customary with Star Fleet, first returned to parade rest. "Thank you, sir." He walked forward under the new first officer's watchful eye. Then stopped at the corner, where there was no hint of a door. He turned to look at Clark.

Gregg Clark smiled. "Well, go on then."

Guz Maxwell turned toward the corner in question and had to deliberately refrain from closing his eyes as he marched into the corner. The walls receded seamlessly, revealing the captain's office beyond. Captain Howard was sitting at his desk, flipping a large coin over and over in his fingers.

"Have a seat, Private."

Skip Howard got up from his seat and took the chair across from Maxwell. Part of what made Skip Howard so intimidating was the tremendous sense of self-confidence that he projected. A self-confidence backed by enormous and evident intellect.

"Do you know what this is?" Captain Howard handed the coin to PFC Maxwell.

Maxwell turned the coin over, and then back over. It was an inch and a half in diameter and was a work of art. The center of the coin was silver, ringed with a thick band of gold and edged with platinum. On one side of the coin was a beautifully designed, full color depiction of an embarrassingly cute beagle, surrounded by the inscription "U.S.S. BEAGLE – Voyage of Discovery." On the other side was the Star Fleet

emblem, also in full color, surrounded by the inscription: “AUDACTER IRE QUO NEMO ANTECESSIT.”

“You designed this coin, sir,” Maxwell observed.

“How do you know?” Skip Howard was amused.

“You named this ship after the ship that carried Charles Darwin on his voyage of discovery and you asked specifically for the Space Hounds to serve in the place of Star Fleet enlisted crew.” Maxwell was pointing first to the inscription on the face side of the coin. “The design of the beagle is similar to the beagle patch worn by the U.S. Marine Space Hounds.” Maxwell patted the beagle patch on the right shoulder of his uniform jacket. “But this isn’t just any beagle. It’s designed after Porthos, Captain Jonathan Archer’s dog, who accompanied him on the first U.S.S. Enterprise.” Maxwell turned the coin to the Star Fleet emblem side and traced the inscription. “And only you would translate Dr. Cochran’s motto into Latin. I didn’t know that Star Fleet kept this tradition, but this is a Captain’s Coin.”

Skip Howard laughed. “No one had to tell me that you are a very clever man, Private. I had seven of those struck. Officers and department directors are ineligible to receive these. Those people perform at my pleasure, and I expect them to regularly surprise me with their excellence. These coins are reserved for the Nakamura Enterprises line engineers and enlisted marines whose performance goes beyond excellence. I have never awarded one of these before today. This coin is for you.”

Guz Maxwell was, for the first time he could remember, thunderstruck. “Sir?”

“This ceremony you are putting together. None of my officers or department directors thought of such a thing. I’m somewhat embarrassed that I didn’t think of it. And it is exactly what we need. This ceremony of yours may end up saving a lot of lives and solving a lot of problems.” Skip Howard leaned forward and sharply tapped Maxwell’s knee with a highly polished, glossy black fingernail. “We’re inviting the holy landers. They are a very ceremonious, ritualistic society and this ceremony of yours will provide us the best chance of a positive cultural outcome.”

“How are you going to protect us from their song?” Maxwell asked.

“We have already disseminated a program to all the personal communicators throughout the task force. In default mode, when your communicator detects an attempt to affect you using subsonic frequencies, it will produce similar frequencies that will cancel out the attacking sound. It is one of many innovations that you can thank Akri Dexe for.”

“That trill oceanographer who seduces everybody?” Maxwell asked. “Well, everybody except you and me...”

“And Gregg Clark,” Howard added.

Maxwell registered surprise. “I can’t believe I didn’t see that in him...”

“Yeah. Me neither,” Howard admitted.

“So maybe Dexe should receive this coin.”

“The coin is for you, Private. Dexe doesn’t qualify. She’s a department director. Brilliant ideas and inventions are just her way of earning her keep.” Captain Howard stood up, indicating this interview was at an end.

Maxwell stood up, came to attention and saluted. “Thank you, sir.”

Captain Howard held out his hand. Maxwell ended his salute and shook his captain’s hand. Skip Howard gripped the young marine’s hand firmly: “I want you to frame that coin, display it in your quarters, and show it to your friends. Tell them why you got it and what it means. I still have six more of these to give away before we make it back home.”

Guz Maxwell smiled, then turned to leave. The door to the bridge was evident on this side. He stopped just short of the door and turned to see Captain Howard taking his seat at his desk. “Sir, may I ask a question?”

The Beagle’s captain looked up at the young marine and made a welcoming gesture with both hands.

“Sergeant Tommy Richards... I just remember you praising him during a meeting for risking his life in some insane way to carry out your orders and how that saved the ship. You didn’t give him a coin?”

There was something just a little brittle in Howard’s smile. “Tommy risked his life for this ship and crew. Was absolutely certain he wasn’t going to survive. It was an act worthy of praise. But laying your life on the line for this ship and crew is expected behavior for a United States Marine, especially under orders. I don’t hand out a Captain’s Coin to reward a man for simply doing his job.” Howard returned his attention to something he had been working on.

Private First Class Guz Maxwell felt Captain Skip Howard’s words causing a seismic shift in his thinking. He suddenly felt 20 years older... or more. He caught his breath and noticed the Captain’s Coin in his hand. He carefully put it in the breast pocket of his uniform jacket and fastened the button. “Thank you, sir.” He turned and exited the captain’s office a different man from the young marine who had walked in only minutes earlier.

SBA Episode 16, Scene 12 - Broken Cords

Chapter Summary

Cords are broken, locked inside the mother Earth...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 12: Broken Cords

Cords are broken, locked inside the Mother Earth ...

16.12

Broken Cords

“Greg and Ki weren’t kidding when they were talking about taking this ship apart. I think this bridge is the biggest piece that remains.”

Captain Ronald Howard, XIV’s voice was somewhat distorted. He stood behind the command throne on the bridge of the U.S.S. Escort, which was currently occupied by Commander Rhonda Carter. All about the bridge, the touch screens and fine control panels had been replaced with large buttons and switches and dials. Every control had to be operable by crew wearing EVA suits. The buttons and switches, dials and levers were all designed around the bulky, pressurized space suit gloves. There was no air on the bridge.

Commander Carter’s voice was also somewhat distorted coming through the EVA communication system. “We buried the frame of the ship and most of the structure fairly deep inside the larger moon. But it’s been stripped of everything we can use. There’s a transporter down there and the industrial replicators and a basic gravity net. A couple of bunks and the medical center. And those rooms are the only parts of what is left of this ship that are pressurized. My people are in Extra Vehicular suits on average 12 hours a day.”

“That is a lot more than recommended,” Skip Howard observed.

“You get used to it,” Carter rejoined. “If my people are going to do battle wearing these bulky suits, I want them to feel like it’s a second skin. Can you believe the early astronauts wore nothing else while they were in space? Gennady Padalka was one of my distant ancestors. Makes me feel closer to him.”

Skip Howard smiled and nodded. “So walk me through the architecture of Fortress Escort.”

Rhonda Carter turned her command throne back toward the front of the bridge. “Lieutenant Singleterry, let’s give our captain the presentation.”

A complex schematic was outlaid across the primary viewscreen and expanded across adjacent viewscreens, providing overviews of the defensive installation in orbit of ASA 4. “We have appropriated the junk that was left in orbit of this planet by a much earlier civilization. Probably those squid gods we’ve caught glimpses of. They seem to be aware of what is going on in orbit, but we have not seen any evidence of any ability on their part to enter orbit. We have also brought in a significant number of asteroids to build a gauntlet. We have 389 asteroids large enough to support a phase pulse cannon and 41 pulse phase cannon installed on various asteroids.”

A number of the asteroids displayed on the schematic, were highlighted “Small batteries on each asteroid will provide signals to indicate each asteroid is armed, whether there is actually a cannon there or not,” Carter continued. “And immediately after a cannon fires, both its asteroid and several nearby asteroids will automatically reposition. All these installations are unmanned and will be remotely controlled from this bridge.” She gestured to the stations around the bridge, all of which had been rebuilt and redesigned for their new purpose – controlling remote weapons installations, using redesigned control surfaces to be operated by crew wearing bulky EVA suits.

More locations were highlighted. “John Jr. and my other godchildren manufactured for us single-shot torpedo launchers,” Carter said. “Only one torpedo in the tube, which means the tube does not have to either survive the launch or reposition. These launchers are so small they will barely register as more than rubble within this field and they can remain dark, so they can be launched at point blank range.”

“But you’re not going to be sitting in this chair, running the show?” Howard asked.

“We need a war master in this chair,” Carter replied. “General Krank has agreed. I’ll be in the Escort’s now liberated tactical launch, doing what I do best.”

“That being?”

“Killing.”

Carter paused and looked at Skip Howard. His face was unreadable behind the visor of his EVA suit.

“Let’s take a walk to the other sections of this command center,” Howard offered.

“That’s a short walk,” Carter observed. She led Captain Howard first to the engine room, then around the perimeter of the facility, which included the impulse engines, rear facing torpedo tubes, phase pulse cannon (now mounted on turrets a top and underneath what was a heavily armored, very small ship. “We swapped the primary and secondary shield generators out with the tactical launch. With the launch operating separately, it doesn’t need the primary generator. We layered all the ablative armor on this much smaller ship and with the primary operational areas already depressurized, dramatically reduced the potential impact of a hull breach.”

Carter led Howard back inside, then into the medical center, which was the most protected part of the mobile installation. It was much larger than the Escort’s tiny medical center and also served as a break area, and was the only part of the installation that was pressurized. The two officers removed their helmets.

“Smells good,” Howard observed.

“The scrubbers have only this small area to keep clean.” Carter sighed heavily. She led Howard to one of the break tables on one side of the room and sagged into a chair.

“There’s so much more to do, primarily figuring out how to keep the holy landers from simply flanking the entire installation instead of entering the gauntlet to face us.”

“That’s what klingons would do,” Howard opined. “Romulans.” He raised his eyebrows and made an amused noise. “Star Fleet. But not, I think, these holy landers. From everything I’ve learned about them, they have a sort of odd chivalry that will draw them right down the maw of this gauntlet. But that’s not what’s bothering you.”

“Yeah,” Carter agreed. “Fog of war. No plan survives contact with the enemy. This is our best option, so we run with it. I’m used to thinking on my feet in battle. And I’ll be in the tactical launch. Best place for me to face the situation head on.” She sighed even more heavily and looked down.

“Escort is broken, Skip. I know you’ve been charged to put this ship back together, but I just don’t see any way that can possibly happen.” Rhonda Carter looked up, emotion evident on her face. “Everyone says you’re the smartest captain in the fleet. Maybe I should have more faith...” There was nothing disparaging in her tone or expression. She was seeking reassurance.

Captain Skip Howard laughed lightly. “You’re buttering up the wrong genius. I’m a biologist, not an engineer...”

“How about Commander Holland?”

“Dutchie can take a communicator pin and a piece of glass and make a rudimentary phaser. I’ve seen him turn an engineering tri-corder into a full spectrum holo-generator. He can turn a pack of transport enhancers into a short-range transporter.” Howard gestured widely around him. “But this, this mess is well beyond him as well. He’s a genius, but what you need for this job is a GENIUS spelled with a capital genius.”

Commander Carter looked crushed.

“I’ll get Sakura on it,” Howard said, lightly.

Carter looked up. “I didn’t know she was an engineer...”

“She’s not. Sakura Nakamura Holland is a people person. And her people are engineers.”

SBA Episode 16, Scene 13 - Watching All of the Worlds

Chapter Summary

They won't hide, hold, they won't tell you
Watching the world, watching all of the world
Watching us go by...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 13: Watching All of the Worlds

*They won't hide, hold, they won't tell you
Watching the world, watching all of the world
Watching us go by ...*

16.13

Watching All of the Worlds

There are countless seas, but only one ocean.

We but flow from one to the next.

Feel the depth. Adjust to the salt.

Feel the life that carries us down to the depths.

Deep, where all the seas are linked.

Linked by a river of life.

All life serves the deeps, from whence it came.

Rock was, arguably, the strangest of the children of John Sevorik, Stephanie the Space Shrimp, and Rocky, the rock encrusted, interdimensional mushroom. Of the 12 children, only 4 were shape shifters, each with their own shape-shifting limitations. Rock's limitation was probably the most restrictive – Rock could only take liquid form. As a result, her lepreshroom land thorn environment had been uniquely designed. Instead of a flat tabletop, Rock rested in a steep bowl and remained in direct contact with the lepreshroom through a number of extremely narrow capillaries in its rocky crust.

Captain Ronald Howard, XIV, Commander Rhonda Carter, Pel and Shadow sat on a lip that had been created around this bowl. While each of Rock's visitors was wearing an Extra Vehicular Activity suit, designed for their species and tailored to their size, they had removed their helmets, which floated nearby, tethered to their suits. Using principles that only masters of warp field theory could try to explain, the childrens' mushroom hosts each maintained a bubble of pressurized and shielded environment, at a comfortable temperature for the vulcan-human-mushroom-shrimp child (and for their occasional humanoid visitors) that each supported.

When she had been born and while she lived onboard the U.S.S. Escort, Rock could only take the form of a puddle and had to flow quickly across the deck to avoid getting stepped on. But in the weightless, spacebound environment provided by her lepreshroom, she could express herself as a mist, or take any form she wanted to create.

For the benefit of her visitors, Rock displayed herself as a lightly rippling sheet of liquid about 8' tall and 6' wide – and less than an inch deep. At that depth, her body was translucent, reflecting the light of the ASA star and the U.S.S. Arizona's running lights from behind her visitors and refracting the light of the ASB and ASC stars behind her.

“Beautiful,” observed Shadow, the genetically modified purple secret agent.

“I hate to admit any favoritism,” started Commander Rhonda Carter, “But I think Rock is the most beautiful of my godchildren.”

“You won’t get any argument from me,” observed Captain Skip Howard.

“She better not,” added Pel. The ferengi trader had become almost as fond of the godchildren as their godmother.

“They abandoned space travel.” Rock’s voice was the hushed, rushed voice of a river, sibilant, and wet with subtle reverberations. If a river or a water fountain could speak, this is what it would sound like. “They found another way.”

Part of Rock’s liquid body flexed and took on the form of the 12-tentacled squid that Professor Newellewell had referred to as, variously, the tinkers or the old gods. The form appeared, then seemed to seamlessly swim through Rock’s form, vanishing from one part of her body and reappearing in another. Then it did it again, the parts of the creature vanishing in one part of her body appearing in another as if it were simply swimming through a portal from one point to another rather than transporting.

“There are many seas, but only one ocean,” said Rock. “And they swim through the deeps from Brail to Beth to Beidth, the worlds you know as ASA 2, ASA 3, and ASA 4. But they have gone much farther than that. They have been to your homeworld. They recognize your DNA. They have experimented on creatures from your world. You fly through space. They swim in the deeps of the oceans and they go much farther than you. They are not concerned with what we do with their space junk. But they are very much aware.”

“What do they want?” asked Skip Howard.

“I do not think they want in any way that would be explainable,” Rock replied in her echoey, whispery, watery voice. “Desire is not something they seem to feel. Your emotions were so very strange to my mother. Emotion itself seems to be completely alien to them. They have no language for it. They do not have a language that you could hope to understand. They go where they go. They do what they do. I don’t think they ever stop to wonder why.”

Rhonda Carter gave an exasperated sigh. “Great. What did I tell you? Cthulhuloids. No empathy. No purpose. Just gods doing whatever it is that they do.”

SBA Episode 16, Scene 14 - Over the Sea to the Valley

Chapter Summary

And you and I climb over the sea to the valley...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 14: Over the Sea to the Valley

And you and I climb over the sea to the valley ...

16.14

Over the Sea to the Valley

Sometimes weeds get into a garden and sometimes the weeds are the most interesting thing in the garden. A botanist might pull the weeds to clear the ground for their desired order and the purity of their experiments. But a biologist, like Skip Howard, would allow the garden to grow wild and observe.

He walked through this obscure corner garden that had suddenly sprouted not a colony of weeds, but an entire cornucopia of wild transplants, blown in from all over. And the weeds were doing what weeds do – they were already busily reproducing. Had been doing that from the moment they had arrived.

Skip Howard rolled to his left to avoid a sample of the newly arrived fauna. But this specimen was curious and determined. It could not see him, and he made very little noise, but this creature had a highly developed chemical sampling and processing sense – it was following its nose to him. Skip was no longer amused and lifted three tentacles in preparation for permanently disabling this irritating creature.

“Skip! Do not kill Spike!”

Skip froze. Another of these creatures, similar in construction, but of different biological origin, had become aware of him. Was looking directly at him.

“There is no reason to harm Spike, Skip. We are aware of your presence. You can safely reveal yourself. No one will attempt to harm you. No one here is capable of it. Invisibility is no longer of use to you. We all know you are here.”

Skip was more irritated. Annoyed. He could weed this entire island within seconds.

“You would bitterly regret harming Spike, Skip. You care about her. You care about everyone here.”

This was even more annoying. Far more annoying because, oddly, it was true. He had never cared about anyone or anything before. This alien sense of caring itself was infuriating. But it was also preventing him from simply crushing and swatting the creature who was so enticingly encircled by three of his tentacles.

This required investigation. A new purpose grew in Skip’s mind. He would take this creature back for study. He became visible.

Lance Corporal Petra Spitze had frozen when Governor T’Eln had shouted. She had, somehow, sensed that the slightest movement might break the spell the ancient vulcan had somehow cast on the invisible creature that she was convinced she had smelled and was still smelling now. Gradually, that creature became visible to her. Dark green, rubbery, a giant squid with 12 gigantic tentacles. It was balanced on 4 of them. Another 3 were encircled around Spike, poised to crush her. The creature she had gotten within a few feet of was twice the size of an elephant. It wasn’t the largest creature she had ever seen, but it was, by far, the largest she had ever been close to. One red-rimmed, baleful eye was focused intently on her. Another was focused on the ancient vulcan.

“Remain still, Lance Corporal,” T’Eln said. “Do not move until I tell you to.” The ancient governor of the ASA 4 colony took a deep breath, then turned slightly to again address the enormous creature. Several other people had emerged from their huts to watch. Others watched from inside their huts. “Take me, Skip. I am the leader of these people.”

“You are too frail,” said Spike. “Take me. I am strong.”

“The difference in strength and stamina between you and me is not measurable to this creature, Lance Corporal. Be silent. Do not speak again until I authorize you to. Or until I am gone.” T’Eln once again turned her attention to the enormous, squid-like creature. “I am not afraid. I know you must treat me with the greatest care if you want the others to study me and learn from me. And of the people here, I am the only one capable of effectively communicating with you. The only one who can begin to understand you. They are polluted by emotion. I am not.”

Slowly, very slowly, the creature withdrew its tentacles from around Spike.

“Walk away, Lance Corporal,” said T’Eln. “That is a lawful order from the local civilian authority.”

Reluctantly, Spike stepped away from the creature. It pivoted far more smoothly and gracefully than anyone could have expected, especially given its size. In a single move, it turned to face T’Eln, rolling slightly to its right, bringing two tentacles out from under it and rolling onto two others. It moved on land with the same speed and grace a squid might move under water. Twice the size of the biggest elephant, it moved with the speed and agility of a monkey.

It rested on 4 tentacles for a moment. 4 red-rimmed eyes surrounded its mouth, which resembled a sphincter made of beaks. One baleful, unblinking eye was regarding Spike. Another was looking at T’Eln. The other eyes were focused variously on the beach and the ocean.

The enormous creature exploded into motion, hurtling toward the ancient vulcan. It wrapped T’Eln in its tentacles, bringing her to its face. In almost the same motion it launched itself into the air, over the beach and into the water, where it quickly vanished beneath the waves.

“Beagle to Lance Corporal Spitze!”

Spike touched the subdued communicator on her U.S. Marine uniform. Her voice was shaky: “Go ahead, Beagle.”

“Spike? This is Skip. Are you okay?”

“Yes Captain. But something just took Governor T’Eln and plunged into the ocean with her. Some... giant... um... 12-tentacled squid thingy? It was huge!”

“I thought I was just dreaming it.” Captain Howard’s voice was just a little groggy sounding. “Hold your ground and remain steady. I’m coming down to investigate.”

“Aye, Captain.”

SBA Episode 16, Scene 15: Reasons to Call

Chapter Summary

And you and I reach out for reasons to call...

Chapter Notes

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



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 16: And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

Scene 15: Reasons to Call

And you and I reach out for reasons to call...

16.15 Reasons to Call

“Captain Howard to the bridge.”

Captain Ronald Howard, XIV was instantly flustered. He had just thrown on his uniform and exited his cabin, bound for the transporter. He stopped in his tracks. “What is it, Lieutenant Commander? I’m on my way to the transporter.”

“No, you are not, sir,” came the voice of Lt. Cmdr. Gregg Clark over Howard’s communicator pin. “Commodore’s orders. The holy landers have made contact and you are needed as our ambassador to them.”

“But T’Eln...” Howard started.

“We are already aware, sir. You cannot go down there. You’re needed up here.”

Skip Howard stood for a moment, breathing deeply, wrestling with his emotions.

“Captain?”

“On my way,” Howard responded. “Patch me through to Commander Carter.” He turned and re-entered his quarters.

As Howard was making it to the back of his quarters, Commander Rhonda Carter’s voice came through his communicator. “Captain Howard? This is Rhonda Carter.”

“Rhonda, you are aware of what just happened to Governor T’Eln?”

“I’m just now getting up to speed on it,” said Carter.

Howard stopped for a moment to check his appearance in the mirror. He ran a comb through his thinning, red hair and touched up his forest-green eye shadow as he as he was talking. “I need you to go down to the colony and take charge. Make sure they install a new civilian leader to serve in T’Eln’s absence. Try to give everyone confidence that we expect she is safe and will return to us. And take care of Spike. Take her with you wherever you go. She was there when T’Eln was taken and it shook her up.”

“Aye, Captain.”

“Rhonda, I think Rock had something to do with all this,” Howard said as he stepped to the back of his quarters, through the back door and stepped onto a lift that took him down into his office. “I think somehow she created a telepathic link between me and one of those... um... cthulhuloids. I’m going to have my hands full with these holy landers. Can you reach out to Rock and see if she can give you more insight?”

“I’ll handle it. Good luck with the holy landers, Skip,” Carter said.

“Never rains, but it pours. Thanks Rhonda. Howard out.” Skip Howard strode through his office and onto the bridge of the U.S.S. Beagle.

Lt. Cmdr. Gregg Clark rose from the command throne and stepped aside. “Commodore Yui wants you to conduct negotiations from this

chair.” He patted the side of the throne. “She likes the way it looks.”

“Hail the Mako,” Howard said as he assumed the Beagle’s oddly regal throne.

“Frequency established, sir,” said Sergeant Tammy Glick, seated at one of the twin rear stations.

“U.S.S. Mako, this is the U.S.S. Beagle, Ronald Howard, XIV, commanding,” Skip Howard said.

Commodore Yui Song, in the far more comfortable looking center seat of the Mako’s bridge, appeared on one of the wall-sized monitors of the Beagle’s bridge.

“This is the U.S.S. Mako, Yui Song commanding. Go ahead, Beagle.”

“Commodore, I am assuming you are aware of the abduction of Governor T’Eln,” Howard started.

“I am aware of the situation and it appears you have assigned Commander Carter to master that situation,” the elderly Chinese woman responded.

“Her time there is limited by the outcome of these negotiations,” Skip Howard replied. “Can you spare Lieutenant Commander Senek to assist her and take over in her place when she needs to return to helm the Escort’s tactical launch?”

In response, without looking behind her, Commodore Yui pointed over her right shoulder at the gorgeous vulcan, currently standing at the tactical communications station at the back of the Mako’s bridge. She then turned her hand and pointed with her thumb to the rear exit to the bridge. In response, Lt. Cmdr. Senek locked his station and exited the bridge. Moments later, a female bolian lieutenant took his place.

“You’re not sending Gregg?” Yui asked.

“I need my first officer by my side,” Howard replied. “You have Shadow and Pel to advise you. Lieutenant Commander Clark has been working closely with them to gain the best possible understanding of the holy landers. I will be relying on his expertise.”

“What is your plan?” Yui asked.

“I plan to invite them to the founding ceremony for the ASA 4 colony on Rattleroot Island. We will not try to negotiate for ASA 2 until we are face-to-face with them. I would like to have Lieutenant Commander zh’Kathar join me for that discussion to discourage them from attempting to dominate us using their sub-sonic vocalizations,” Howard said.

“Are you not confident of the communicator adaptations that are supposed to protect you from their songs?”

“I’m reasonably confident that those counter-measures will work,” Howard replied. “But I would prefer to avoid alerting them that we have developed those counter-measures for as long as possible.”

In response, Yui Song nodded her head sagely. “I like your thinking. Lieutenant Oroht, please replay the message we received from the holy landers.”

In response, Lt. Kykena Oroht, the bolian who had taken over the tactical communications station, activated a control. A very garishly made-up female alien appeared on the viewscreens on the bridges of the U.S.S. Beagle and the U.S.S. Mako.

“I am Queen. One of your ships has contaminated this galaxy with a very dangerous infestation, an invasive species your ship brought here from the Great Wheel. By my decree, your ships are confiscated and will be destroyed. All traces of the infestation are to be destroyed. Your people are quarantined locally under my supervision. Any additional federations who may arrive will be subject to my ruling. Respond with honor, and no punishment will be added to this order. That is all.”

“Well, she told us, didn’t she?” Howard observed.

“So how do we respond to this, Captain?” asked Commodore Yui Song. “Her decrees do not put me into a particularly diplomatic mood.”

“We follow the plan,” Skip Howard replied. “With your approval, I will invite her and her court to the opening ceremony on ASA 4. Instead of rejecting her decrees, I will contest them, which will, hopefully, require some sort of trial, which will, hopefully, give Captain Phloxx time to arrive and even the odds.”

“Very well, Captain Howard,” Yui responded. “Prepare your transmission and provide it to me for review. You will be the face of our task force. I will be the authority behind you.” Yui Song’s expression hardened, if that was possible. She looked and sounded cold and regal. “That queen will have to earn the privilege of talking to me.”

And You And I Part I - Cord of Life

This is the final scene for Episode 16.

The adventure will continue with Episode 17: And You And I Part II - Eclipse.

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