

Along the Road to Come What May

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Along the Road to Come What May

by [B_Radley](#)

Summary

The aftermath of Leelix III, felt in three empires across the galaxy.

After Action - Starfleet

Mike Walsh sits at the conference table in his flagship, perhaps for the last time. He knew a day would come where he would no longer be in space; he'd shoved that day away as far as he could.

The door opens and Hunter, his new Commander, Border Patrol walks in. He rises and extends his hand. When she grasps it, he pulls her into a tight embrace, with the familiarity of those who had spent decades exploring or protecting the vastness of space.

He looks at her as she sits next to him, then smiles. She had always been relaxed, calm in the face of anything, but she now takes that relaxation to a new level. Since she had realized her life's dream.

There is a chime and others arrive, via holocom. Mike's eyebrows rise as he sees that there are only three at this meeting.

Mary Decker nods at him, as does Jameson McCall. The other is Pavel Chekov, apparently representing the President.

"Hello, Mary," he says. He grins. "Power suits you."

She rolls her eyes as the others smile. "Just trying it on. I'm already thinking that I want to go back to fixing and building ships." Her smile fades. "How many did we lose?"

He looks at Hunter. "I think we've got about twenty dead, among the Group and the civilians on Leelix who helped us fight. Large numbers of wounded, but we were able to get the civilian population of the settlement in shelters." She looks down at her PADD. "Preliminary reports are that, with the exception of the torpedo squadron that got there at the end, the Banshees may be done for awhile as a fighting force. Every ship is damaged to some extent. The leader—the *Comstock*—is on the ground, without power to even raise ship."

"We've got two starships there, right?" Mary asks.

"Yes. The wing leader, the *Ayoan*, and the *Constitution* made it," Hunter says. Mike narrows his eyes at the last, but says nothing. Hunter meets his expression and gives a quick, almost unnoticeable nod.

"And the *Pathfinder*?" Mary asks.

"They were ambushed by a deuterium carrier on the way to back up Major Blackthorne's force at the insurgent base. Acting-Commodore Thelek was killed. Saavik fought the attacker off, then made it to support the marine attack on the insurgents' base. That force is on its way to Leelix III," Hunter says. She looks at McCall. "The *Starlight*, your little spy ship, went down. The two operatives survived."

"So what will we have at Leelix?" Mary asks.

Hunter defers to Mike. "I've requested a Task Group from ADSAC and the Exploration Force. They'll reinforce the remaining Border Patrol squadron, until the 17th can get back up. The new Task Force 51 commander will arrive soon," he says.

"Smillie and Skinner expect you here in San Francisco next week," Mary says.

He nods, then looks at McCall. "What about Section 31, Prince?"

Starfleet's spymaster takes a deep breath. "That remains to be seen. Since the Romulan sleeper agent might've been killed, along with Stivek, we haven't heard anything more. If I can get Covenant back in Romulan space with Vandal, we can see who was running Reese." He gives a crooked grin and looks at Chekov. "But higher-ups may have bigger things for him, if they can persuade him."

Chekov only smiles. "Sentinel is very persuasive," is all that he says.

The Banshees

Chandra walks over to the main hospital, where most of the defense forces had gathered. Grasp's security operators were still on the prowl for Klingons, or whoever else that they can find that may have crewed the ships. They'd found the body of at least one Andorian merc and an Orion. Their hands had been up, as if they were surrendering.

They had been shot in the back with what looked like medium powered disruptors.

None of the Klingons had surrendered and they hadn't allowed anyone else with them to, as well.

Chandra sees a familiar mass of copper curls sitting on a low wall. She breathes out as she notices that Kim Sinclair is looking into her left eye with a scanner.

She inhales again as she sees that Kim is clad in her field undershirt with the left sleeve torn off and wrapped around her arm, between her elbow and shoulder.

Siobhan straightens and pushes Kim's hand away when she spots Chandra. She looks directly at Chandra, as if daring her to say something.

Chandra turns to the doctor. "Report, Doc," she says. Her expression brooks no argument.

"Some type of flare up with her original injury. I'm not sure what it is, but something's going on. It was healed and not even a concern."

"I'm okay, Captain," Siobhan says, her voice with a desperate note in it.

Chandra doesn't say anything for a moment. "I know you think so, but Kim is the ultimate decision-maker in this, Shiv. Even for me."

Shiv turns to look at Kim, narrowing her eyes—both of them. "And who the hell is the decider for her? You and she are in an exclusive club, Cap," she continues, "she got that booboo when she took on a Klingon twice her size with a bat'leth."

"And where, pray tell, is the Klingon?" Kim asks.

Shiv says nothing. Chandra is fairly certain that the bat'leth-wielder is probably no longer in this world. Literally.

There is a commotion near them. "Stop him," someone yells. "He punched that woman!"

Chandra sees a short, skinny, human male shoving his way through the crowd. Her eyes track down to the ground; her eyes widen as she sees Usura, Theelia's server on the ground, blood pouring from a cut under her cheek.

Kim is next to her in a moment. Usura shoves her away. As she gets up, Chandra catches a glimpse of her eyes and the skin of her face.

She stops as she sees something like a flash of green. She turns away, just in time to see Agon clothesline the running figure.

After Action - the Klingon Empire

K'hrella stops at the door. The two bat'leth-wielding guards stare blankly at her. Finally, the door moves aside. She moves into the room, sparing no glance for the guards. She sees the figure standing at the large, armored window, staring out at the city.

"Hello, Senior Force Leader," Azetbur, daughter of Gorkon, says quietly. K'hrella becomes aware that there is another in the room. She nods briefly at General Kerla, who takes a longer moment to return the gesture.

"Report," he says. She turns away from him and looks at Azetbur. She sees the Chancellor's face in the reflection of the window. K'hrella can tell that she gazes up at the shattered visage of Praxis.

"It is done?"

"Yes, Chancellor," she replies. "House of Klinzhai will most probably return to the fold of the Empire."

"And the Klingon Free Systems?"

"There are still a sept of the House that haven't rejoined us. Their territory has diminished. I'm sure the Romulans will be sending forces to reclaim what the rebels had taken."

"I'm not so sure," Azetbur replies. "I think that someone among the Romulans are giving them aid."

After a moment, K'hrella nods. "It's possible, milady," she says. "If it's not the Praetor-Prime, it is someone who might have her ear."

"Are there descendants of Nanclus? The third member of the conspiracy who are still alive?" Kerla asks from his corner.

K'hrella considers this for a moment. "It's possible. The Romulans allegedly wiped out his entire family. But t'Rrallion has a propensity for preserving the life of at least one in a family that she wipes out, for her own amusement. There is one who isn't accounted for, maybe two."

“Who?” Azetbur asks.

“A niece. Her mother was an admiral-superlative. She was kept by t'Rrallion for a time as a trophy, but we don't know where she went. Llara probably tired of her as an adornment and had her executed.”

“You said that there might be two?” Azetbur asks.

“Yes. Another sibling of Nanclus had a son. The brother was already dead, but his son was in the Tal Shiar. They look out for their own.”

Azetbur and Kerla are both silent. Azetbur turns, then moves towards her desk. She reaches into a drawer and pulls an object out.

K'hrella exhales, but keeps her emotions in check. Kerla comes over and takes the object. He looks at K'hrella. Without a word, she lifts the less-ornate baldric from over her head.

Kerla replaces it with the one that the Chancellor had handed her. K'hrella stares at her.

Her head snaps back with the full-on blow from Kerla. She doesn't wipe the blood from her nose and mouth. “You've now skipped the rank of Master Force Leader. You are now a Colonel, attached to my staff and household. You are to use your contacts in the Federation and the Romulan empire—particularly those of your mother's family—to find this threat to the Empire,” Azetbur says.

K'hrella lets the blood continue onto her armor. She smiles, sure that her strange hue of green blood shows on her bared teeth.

After Action - the Romulans

Megara t'Khnialmnae enters the small room. A mysterious message had been sent to her from this backwater world near the Outmarches. Her eyes fall on the two figures standing the dim light, both swathed in robes. One of them bears a sword along her back. She lifts the cowed hood from her, revealing a somewhat familiar face.

She keeps her expression even and calm, not showing any surprise at the revelation of the Qowat Milat sister. One who Megara suspects might be somewhat higher ranking than a mere sister. She looks more closely at the woman's face, then sees what makes her familiar.

Megara smiles. “You're a t'Lorcana. I thought your family was slaughtered when t'Rrallion executed Commander Grala t'Lorcana.”

The woman, obviously younger than the officer that Megara had witnessed being executed in a painful, degrading fashion—a method of execution known as the Remedy, one that is rarely used anymore—smiles. “Not even the Praetor-Prime can touch a sister of the Qowat Milat, if they don't want to be.”

Megara nods. “I'm glad that someone of the family survived,” she says quietly. “She didn't deserve the fate, much less anyone else. What is your name, Sister?”

“I'm was once called Tiyana,” she says. “But now I am known as ‘Mother’.”

Megara shifts her vision to the other figure, who looks at Tiyana, as if for permission. Tiyana nods.

The figure lifts the hood, revealing the face of a human woman, but one with another bit of familiarity. Megara's memory trips, of another woman kneeling in front of Grala t'Lorcana as she died.

Waiting her own turn on the infernal machine.

“You're Subcommander D'aina t'Sonrees,” she says.

The young woman smiles. “Once I was. Now I am someone else.”

Realization strikes Megara. “So you've infiltrated the humans? Starfleet?”

“In a manner of speaking,” she says, her lips quirking. Megara walks closer to her. She lifts her hand to the woman's cheek. She can feel the warmth, but otherwise, her look is complete. “Exquisite work. Based on who ordered your execution, I'm thinking you worked for my opposite number, the Praetor-Prime?”

“Ostensibly,” D'aina says. “But apparently I was actually working for Ambassador Nanclus' family.”

Megara nods. “I hadn't put the two together,” she says. “And what were you doing?”

“Continuing to foster the same conspiracy that Nanclus had, apparently.”

“In Starfleet?”

She nods. “More specifically, a single branch of Starfleet. One in the Shadows,” she says, naming a place of one of the darker Elements—the one that isn't generally named.

Megara feels her eyebrow raise. “Section 31.”

D'aina merely smiles.

“It was never proven that Admiral Cartwright was a part of Section 31.”

“Yes,” D'aina says. “There was at least one unrevealed co-conspirator. A Vulcan. I think that the rest of Section 31—the true leaders distanced

themselves from that conspiracy.”

“So what was your mission for the Praetor?”

“On the surface, I was to sew chaos. But I think that she looked to me to try to reinstate that conspiracy. But in reverse. To bring down the Federation and the Klingons.”

“How?”

D’aina smiles. “I think that answer lies in the Klingon Free Systems. Or what’s left of them. The House of Chang may not be as dead as everyone thinks.”

Megara exhales as she contemplates this. Something that may be bigger than her Federation contacts may have thought.

As she boards her ship, she is greeted by another hooded figure. This one removes her hood when they are alone, revealing a Deltan woman of middle years.

One known to be in the employ of the Praetor-Prime.

Once again, at least on the surface. Megara looks into the amber eyes. “You heard?”

The Deltan smiles. “I did.”

“Do you know what in the hell is going on?”

“I’m working on it,” she says. “I haven’t gotten anything from the Praetor, or her two dunderheads.”

Megara sighs. “I was hoping that her Tal Shiar boytoy might be the weak link.”

“He might still be. But never underestimate a Tal Shiar thug. Even when you’re seducing him.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Megara says. “Can you reach Covenant—C’daya? My Herald?”

“I’ll see what I can do,” the woman known as Danara says. “What about your contacts among the Klin?”

Megara nods. “I will see what I can do,” she says, unconsciously repeating Danara’s words. “I think that a certain pirate of my acquaintance, in spite of her reputation for hating the Klin, can contact her family in the Empire.”

When Megara is gone, after the two of them had honored the rituals of Danara’s people—many times—Danara is left alone with her thoughts.

She allows herself to remember, particularly when she is alone and away from the Praetor-Prime’s household.

She thinks of the life that she had left behind. The two bonds, at least one who had banished her from them, intrude into her memories.

Memories of the choice that she had made, after meeting a human male, who had shown her a path. Something she hadn’t found before, even after giving birth to her daughter.

A path of service in the Shadows, as the Romulans called it. A path that had brought her to the pinnacle of that Shadowy profession, where she answered to only one person, who answered only to a couple more.

A path that had led her away from her family, in disgrace at least to some members’ thinking. Danara allows herself to think of that daughter.

Of the intelligent gray-blue eyes, a similar shape as her brown, looking up at her as her mouth was busy at Danara’s nipple.

She thinks of the expression of near-recognition of the young human male in the other Praetor’s service. Someone who she could taste in her Link, even as she masked her own.

Jennalara ná Gemsera né Songet, Federation Free Agent, shoves the memories away.

Danara is once again in place.

After Action - Section 31

Sandiya Prandi moves into her quarters. The *Constitution* is in orbit around Leelix III, along with the *Ayoan*. The rest of Chandra’s group, the ones that had arrived later accompany the two capital ships in a protective umbrella.

Both starships had opened up their sickbays and had sent down emergency medical modules for the injured. Surprisingly, the number of deaths had been few; the tiny government of the colony has a robust shelter plan in place, based on its proximity to the Neutral Zone.

Prandi feels the object in her pocket vibrate. She sighs and puts down her tea. She opens the flap of her jacket and pulls out the hidden delta. The black surface absorbs most of the light, but reflects some as well. She closes her eyes for a moment, gathering herself.

It buzzes again, seemingly more insistent this time. She opens her eyes, then lifts her tunic flap, securing it in place. She inserts the delta into the slot on her comm panel.

An old woman, in her eighties, Sam knows, but looking at least two decades younger, appears. Her blue eyes appraise Sam. Sam takes in the relatively youthful appearance, with high cheekbones and flawless complexion, even through the signs of age. A sardonic smile comes over

her features, showing the small space between her teeth that Sam remembered.

“Manager,” she says in a throaty, clear voice.

“Grand Admiral,” she replies.

“Well, we have fuckup of massive proportions,” Charity Brannigan says, her still-golden eyebrow rising.

Sam matches her expression. “Perhaps,” she says. “Did you order Stivek’s sanction?”

The expression hardens, then a smaller smile returns. “I won’t answer that. But I understand we may have another problem?”

“Your principal operative has gotten captured. Apparently he punched one that we suspect is of his species—another perhaps lost in time—in public and was arrested.”

“And the other? The female?”

“Her cover is still intact to the others there. But I’m not sure what she is playing at.”

Brannigan takes this in. “I’d prefer not to sanction the operative. I don’t want to say that none of us aren’t expendable, but they both are gifts that dropped in our laps forty years ago. Or at least one of them is. I have hopes for the other.”

Sam keeps her expression even at the last phrase. “And Stivek? As well as the Romulan?”

“It is good that Stivek is no longer with us. His hatred and xenophobia has no place in Section 31. We act as we need to, but we still uphold the ideals of the Federation. As for the Romulan operative that was exposed, we’ll try to contain the damage. We’ll continue to watch, rather than take active measures. We have enough members throughout Starfleet that we can be effective in our actions.”

“And me?”

Charity smiles. “We’ll keep you in place, for now. If we need to, we’ll submerge you on one of our concealed assets.”

Sam nods. “Very well, Grand Admiral,” she says, using the woman’s other title.

Not the one in Section 31.

“And our enemies in Starfleet?”

“We will leave them alone. We’ll watch for any signs of treason to the Federation. They may have different beliefs than we do, but I’m not sure that they’re a threat to the Federation. I think they will be concentrating on whoever else from the Romulan side was making Stivek dance to their tune—especially if it’s related to Cartwright and his band of traitors and murderers on all sides.” Charity nods to her. “By any means necessary,” she says.

Sam whispers the rest of the mantra as the holo fades. “For the good of the Federation.”

She sits in darkness. Wondering, as she always does, if the response to the call should be something else, with so many webs being woven.

For the good of Section 31.

Reunited

Decker walks towards the hospital to find the group commander. It would be awhile before *Comstock* and most of the Group would be combat effective. In reality, only the three boomers that had arrived later were any shape for anything. Even the other torpedo corvette, the *Crusader*, was severely damaged and would need a dockyard for repair.

Decker had heard that the *Starlight* had gone down in an attack on what had turned out to be the base for the deuterium carriers. She wasn’t too sure who the hell was behind it all, but it was above her pay grade.

She feels a twinge of pain in her ribs. The twinge turns into something more; her breath escapes her. She finds a low wall and sits. She tries to catch her breath.

“Are you alright, Lieutenant?” a voice asks.

Decker looks up. A woman with somewhat familiar face stands over her. She realizes that the woman’s face, even with her standing, isn’t too much higher than Decker’s seated. She also realizes that the woman’s right eyebrow is raised and doesn’t show any sign of lowering, giving her a look of perpetual curiosity.

She searches her memory where she had met her. The woman, in her thirties, shakes her head. “I’m Sara Quigley,” she says.

Decker smiles. “Our Phd. Intel Advisor,” she says, giving the unofficial title for a Starfleet Intelligence operative who wasn’t a specialist or an officer.

She smirks. “Got it in one, Lieutenant.” She moves over and sits next to her. Decker sees that her curly hair is filled with dust and her face is smudged with dirt. She has a pulse rifle slung over her shoulder; she looks tired.

“How’re you doing?” Decker asks, forgetting her own pain.

“I’m okay. Like nothing I’ve ever lived through before.”

“Still thinking you might go back to academia in a year?”

This from a voice standing next to the wall, at the other end. A voice with a sharp taste of London.

Or Staffordshire.

Decker manages to come to her feet and walks towards Siobhan. She pulls Shiv to her, forgetting her ribs in the orthopedic matrix. She squeezes Shiv tightly to her.

Siobhan kisses her neck.

Sara watches as Captain Lincolnton looks over Captain Sinclair’s shoulders. Her eyes are wide. She sees that the left one is red, even after Dr. Sinclair had treated her.

There is something like fear in the other.

Or uncertainty.

Debriefing

Chandra walks into Ahava Rosen’s cabin on the *Ayoan*. Without a word, both officers move to one another and embrace tightly.

“That was close,” Ahava says.

“Agreed. And I don’t know how we’re going to do any better the next time somebody wants to go over the damned top,” Chandra says.

Ahava is silent for a moment. She gets up and goes over to a cabin. She pulls out a pale green liquid and two glasses. Chandra watches as she pours large measures into each glass.

They clink glasses, then Ahava says, “To holding the line.”

“To holding the line,” Chandra repeats. They both drink. They don’t sip. They drink until the glasses are empty.

They refill them. Ahava still hasn’t said anything; Chandra wonders if she has overstepped.

“Someone agrees with you,” she says. She touches a button on her PADD.

Chandra’s heart twists as her foster mother appears. Hunter is wearing a full Service Dress Alpha uniform, something Chandra thinks she has seen her wear maybe a handful of times.

Her eyes catch on the new insignia on her shoulder strap.

“Congratulations, Vice Admiral,” Chandra says.

Hunter smiles. “I’m glad to see you in one piece, dahlah.”

“So you’re confirmed?”

“Yep,” Hunter replies. “I’m now Bulldog Six, officially.” Her face grows serious. “My first official act will be to recall your group to Mars for a full refit.”

Chandra says nothing. “We nearly got our asses kicked, Hunter,” she says. “We’re spread thin out here.”

“I know. And I’m working on that, even though we may not see a building program anytime soon for our corvettes or cutters or whatever you want to call them. I’m going to concentrate on beefing up what we got, with heavier weapons and maybe some heavier ships mixed in.”

She looks at Rosen. “Ahava, I’m sending you a DESRON to make up for the loss of the Banshees. Three *Sal-ah-din*-class destroyers and two *Farragut*-class frigates. So some heavy and medium scouts at least. I may get some starships detailed as well—at least some more *Mirandas*.”

“Not exactly going to have the same flexibility, Admiral,” she says. “Or the mobility.”

“I know, Ahava,” Hunter replies to the Commodore. “But the new Special Operations Capable Squadron hasn’t finished working up.”

Chandra sees Ahava perk up. She’d caught it, too. “Squadron? You mean I’m not getting a group?”

Hunter grins. “I can’t do much for the numbers, but I can make some changes. We’re going back to the old ways. Before a damned close-support fighter jockey had the Border Patrol. We’re doing away with wings. Groups will contain three squadrons, each commanded by a Captain (L). The squadrons will be made up of more flexible flotillas, all mixed together, rather than single types.”

Chandra sees Rosen smiling. “So the Rear Admirals will have the basis for divisions again, if the balloon goes up?”

“Yep. We’ll be building up our reserve components, for now.”

Hunter looks at Chandra. “I’ve got an idea to try for the SOC squadrons as well. I’m going to try it with yours first.”

Chandra feels her eyes narrow, especially at her next words.

"I'm going to ask you to jump off of a cliff, love."

The Next Chapter

Jamie Blackthorne walks along a path from the field where the marine cutter had set down. He and Ava had already said goodbye; she had gone to meet with D'Shaya and Francis, who had been rescued by the *Pathfinder*.

He had walked over to check on them when they had materialized next to the *O'Bannon*. Their combined dark looks at him had helped him decide not to. Ava had shared a glance with him, then rolled her eyes. He watches as D'Shaya breaks eye contact with him, then pulls Francis closer to her. She reaches up and kisses him. After a moment, he breaks the eyefuck with Croft and returns the kiss, pulling D'Shaya closer against him.

"I see you're making friends just like you always do," says a light voice behind him. One that warms him from stem to stern. He turns to see Chandra walking over to him, her captain's service dress bomber jacket slung over her shoulders.

Her arms are toned and powerful as always. He exhales sharply, even seeing the dirt covering and the hastily bandaged wound with dark purple splotches showing on her arm.

"Heard you saved the day," she says. He thinks about how much he has missed her voice, a mix of London, Delta IV, and a generic Federation accent. He doesn't reply.

I have too, he hears in his mind, in T'Varilyn's throaty voice. Croft can tell that Chandra hears her as well, as her Threads spike with the familiar feeling when both bonds were close.

He looks up and sees three young women walking up, along with two about his and Chandra's age. Kaylin, Chandra's foster sister laughs at something that Siobhan says, while Decker rolls her eyes.

Morgan McMurtry and Emma Rosewarne walk behind the three, arm-in-arm.

Chandra pulls up to him and then reaches over and brings her hands to his cheeks. She keeps her eyes open, as usual as she kisses him for only the second time in a year.

He sees that the eyes are focused on those five young women. One, a brand-new acquaintance, another maybe a year's worth of memories, a third who had grown up with Chandra, and two others who had been their family for the better part of a decade, with only one other missing from their circle, but reachable, all move up to them. One gone forever, not even reachable in any psychic or empathic bond, but with a legacy born of one of these women.

Croft feels that Chandra's Link is at peace, at least for now, with all of them here. Even with different trials that he feels all of them will still need to face, for their own reasons.

They will all face them in their own ways.

But all together, even across the galaxy.

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