

## The Tragedy of the Kotsoteka

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## The Tragedy of the Kotsoteka

by [pcpatterson](#)

### Summary

A short story, set shortly after the Klingon-Federation War featured in Star Trek: Discovery, season 1. Captain Alinda Wah and the U.S.S. Kotsoteka attempt to protect a medical convoy from Orion pirates. Featuring original characters.

## The Tragedy of the *Kotsoteka*

By P.C. Patterson

### Old Earth Calendar Year 2258

The Federation starship U.S.S. *Kotsoteka* came skidding out of warp and into normal space, her nacelles venting glittering yellow plasma like steam from a geyser. Three long gashes in her stardrive section still glowed red around the edges and flickered with failing force fields. There was no universal “up” or “down” in space, but even still, the wounded ship seemed to list drunkenly as its momentum carried it through the outer edges of a rainbow-hued nebula.

The *Kotsoteka*’s captain, a Betazed named Alinda Wah, gripped the arms of her command chair so hard her knuckles were turning white but otherwise emanated a calm and determined focus. Given the telepathic abilities of her species, that emanation could have been literal. But Captain Wah was well-skilled at keeping her own thoughts and emotions from accidentally radiating out to her crew.

“Status report,” she ordered.

“Hull breaches reported in multiple sections on decks eight, nine, and ten,” came the gruff voice of Wah’s Tellarite first officer, Lieutenant Commander Kozuri. “Main power is offline; backups are running at fifty percent. Sickbay reports over a dozen casualties.” A proximity alert sounded from the tactical console in front of him, and all eyes went to the main viewscreen at the front of the bridge.

A dark green Orion raider, curved like a bird’s beak and bristling with weapon ports, slipped into normal space behind Captain Wah’s ship. One of its close-set warp nacelles flickered with power surges. It was one of two pirate ships that had ambushed the *Kotsoteka* and the ships it was escorting at high warp, using the radiation from the very nebula they were now in to hide from the *Kotsoteka*’s sensors until the Orions were right on top of them.

These kinds of attacks were increasingly common along this travel route, but Starfleet Command had deemed this mission worth the risk. An epidemic raged on planet Hu’voth and quickly threatened to become a system-wide pandemic. Supplies and expertise were desperately needed, and Federation help was coming in the form of the S.S. *Nightingale*, a hospital ship, and a freighter called the *Oberon*. Starfleet’s admiralty, working with a fleet depleted by the recently concluded Klingon-Federation war, had wagered that a single *Hoover*-class light cruiser such as the *Kotsoteka* would be enough to deter any would-be pirates from attacking the convoy. They had lost that bet.

“Any sign of the other raider?” Captain Wah asked.

“No, sir,” replied Commander Kozuri.

“Did we destroy it?”

Kozuri consulted his console. Captain Wah wanted to swear with impatience but didn’t do so. There may not be any other telepaths on her crew, but they all knew how to read human emotions, and everyone was taking their cue from her.

“We can’t tell,” said Commander Kozuri with a snarl of frustration. Tellarites were naturally surly and impatient and never bothered to hide it. “The radiation from the nebula continues to interfere with our sensors.”

That was maddeningly unhelpful, but Wah just nodded in acknowledgment and thumbed the com button on her chair’s control panel. “Engineering, this is the bridge. What’s the status of the warp drive, Chief Unka?”

There was a short pause, and then an unfamiliar voice replied.

“Bridge, this is Lieutenant Suvol. Chief Unka is in sickbay with severe plasma burns. The warp core is severely damaged; I anticipate breach is imminent and unavoidable.”

Captain Wah’s lips, already a thin line, disappeared completely. “How much time do we have?”

There was a pause as the Vulcan engineer conversed in low tones with someone else. “Our best estimate is ten minutes, Captain.”

“Ejection systems?” asked Wah, turning to the bridge operations station. An unfamiliar ensign sat there; Wah’s Chief of Operations, Lieutenant Colter, had suffered a head injury during the initial ambush and been evacuated to sickbay. The ensign – Meridia was her name, Wah recalled – was not a regular bridge crew member, and the waves of fear and excitement radiating off her were so intense that the Betazoid captain could practically feel them smashing against her own telepathic barriers. But to the young human’s credit, her voice was calm and steady as she replied, “Online and functional, Captain.”

The *Kotsoteka* gave a violent shudder, and the lights on the bridge dimmed. A second ship-shaking vibration quickly followed. “The Orions have re-entered weapons range,” said Commander Kozuri, belaboring the obvious. “Aft shields are at thirty percent.”

“Weapons?”

“Aft phasers are offline, but the torpedo launcher is operational.”

“Then return fire,” Wah ordered. “Target their warp engines. We have to keep them offline; give the other ships time to escape.”

“Aye captain,” snuffed the Tellarite. On the main viewscreen, four photon torpedoes rocketed away from the *Kotsoteka* and towards the Orion ship. Green disruptor fire lanced out from the raider’s curved forward hull, and, one by one, the glowing orange orbs winked out before they had a chance to hammer the enemy’s shields. The bright display of colors, splayed against the cotton-candy background of the nebula, was almost pretty.

Captain Wah sighed. The Orion ship was more heavily armed – they usually were – but the *Kotsoteka* was built like an Andorian hornet: fast and able to deliver a debilitating sting. Captain Wah and the ship had seen each other through more than a dozen engagements in the Klingon War; she would put that experience up against an Orion pirate’s any day. In a head-to-head battle, Captain Wah was confident her ship and crew would have come out on top.

But this wasn’t that. The *Kotsoteka* had been outnumbered two to one and was concerned about more than her own survival. The pirates’ real targets were the supplies on board the medical freighter and hospital ship. One of the many still-echoing consequences of the Klingon-Federation War was an overall shortage of such supplies. Those aboard *Nightingale* and *Oberon* represented a small fortune on the black market.

All of this had been part of Captain Wah’s mission briefing, so as soon as the enemy ships appeared on the sensors, she knew exactly what they were after. She’d had just enough time to maneuver the *Kotsoteka* between the raiders and the rescue ships, shielding them from the brunt of the Orion’s initial onslaught. It had worked - the relief ships had continued to Hu’voth at maximum warp while the *Kotsoteka* engaged the enemy – but the cost in damage to the *Kotsoteka* ship had been high.

Captain Wah could name each of the seventy-two souls currently on her ship and all twenty-seven Starfleet members who had died under her command during the war. The pain of losing each and every one of them had sharpened and weathered her into the combat veteran she was today. Nothing mattered more to her than the lives of her crew – unless her orders said otherwise.

Hu’voth alone had a population of nearly a billion people, and the plague ravaging the planet had a mortality rate of nearly thirteen percent. Then there was the outpost in orbit and the colonies on the moon of the system’s gas giant, which added up to several million more. It was no exaggeration to say that hundreds of millions of lives depended on the *Nightingale* and the *Oberon*’s escape. The other Orion ship was either destroyed or outside of the *Kotsoteka*’s reach; it was up to Captain Wah and her crew to delay this second raider long enough to make it impossible for them to catch up with the fleeing ships before they reached the safety of the Hu’voth system.

It wasn’t that Captain Wah had a death wish, though she had come close to death enough times during the war that she no longer feared it. As a survivor, she felt a nagging sense of guilt and loss that she doubted would ever fully fade. But she also felt a duty to keep living in honor of those who no longer did.

Like so many Starfleet officers, Alinda Wah had originally been a scientist. A Starfleet xenobiologist, to be exact, and the chief science officer of a long-range explorer called the *Jonas Salk*, studying alien life on the edge of known space. It had been her dream career since she was a girl on Luna and one she’d worked her whole life to achieve. Then the Battle of the Binary Stars had happened, the Klingons had invaded, and she’d become a captain and soldier because there had been no other choice. Now that the war had ended – abruptly, and for reasons that were still shrouded in mystery – Alinda had chosen the choice to stay in Starfleet in hopes of returning to the days of being an explorer and scientist. She knew she couldn’t really go back; she had seen and wrought too much death and destruction to ever be the same person she had been before. But when she finally got the chance to lay down her sword and shield, she was pleased to find that her curiosity and wonder about the universe had survived intact.

But now here she was – back in the fight, outgunned and on her heels, trying to pull off one more miracle. Alinda took a moment to look around the bridge and her crew hard at work, each focusing on their stations and the pieces of the ship that were within their sphere of control.

They all seemed impossibly young to her; the surviving members of her original crew had either been promoted to help fill the upper ranks of a war-ravaged Starfleet or decided not to press their luck and called it a career. Five of her ship's "senior" staff were newly promoted junior officers holding their first position of real authority. She felt a pain of guilt and grief at the idea that they might not survive long enough to become seasoned officers themselves but compartmentalized it with practiced efficiency. Captain Wah knew death was both inevitable and random; few saw it coming, and even those who did could rarely do anything about it. Life went on until it didn't. And she, the *Kotsoteka*, and her crew were going to do as much as they could for as long as they could for the people of Hu'voth.

She cleared her throat and tapped the button that whistled the ship-wide intercom to life. "Attention, crew. I wish we had time for an inspirational speech, but we don't. You know our mission. You know the stakes. Our warp core is fried, so the only Orion ship we can do anything about is the right one behind us. Remember - we are Starfleet. Stay calm, do your jobs, and we'll get through this together. Wah out."

Not the best speech she'd ever given, but it would have to do.

"Helm," she barked, "continue evasive maneuvers. We've still got impulse engines; crank them up to max, and let's make them think we're running. Tactical, prepare to shunt all emergency power to forward shields and weapons. Target the Orion ship's engines, but do not fire until I give the order. Operations, is our tractor beam still online?"

"Yes, Captain," called Ensign Mandia.

"Captain," interrupted the voice of Lieutenant Soval from engineering. "Core containment loss is accelerating. Revised estimate is two minutes or less until breach."

"Acknowledged," said Wah. "Standby to eject the core. Helm, has the Orion ship moved to match our speed?"

"Yes, sir," replied the turquoise-skinned lieutenant at the pilot's console. "Sensors show their engines are burning at maximum power."

"Alright people, here's what's about to happen," said Captain Wah, and lowered her mental defenses. In two and a half seconds, all seventy-two crewmembers of the *Kotsoteka* had telepathically received and absorbed her plan. In those same two and a half seconds, their collective fear and anxiety abated, and a sense of grim determination rose in its place as their captain lent them her own battle-tested bravery.

"Execute attack pattern omega zion. . . now."

In the space of a few human heartbeats, the *Kotsoteka* cut her forward engines and initiated a thruster-powered flip and burn. The Orion ship, caught by surprise, charged on at full speed, firing disruptors at where the Federation ship had just been. The *Kotsoteka* arced over and above the raider on the thin edge of her saucer section, bringing all her forward weapons to bear. A blur of orange photon torpedoes and lancing blue phaser fire poured out of *Kotsoteka*, smashing into the Orion ship's energy shields.

At the speed at which the ships were moving, the g-forces of the maneuver were enough to nearly overload the *Kotsoteka*'s inertial dampeners. Captain Wah felt herself pressed into her seat so hard that the edges of her vision went black. The frame of the ship screamed and moaned in protest and Captain Wah heard a voice – whose, she could not tell – cry out in pain.

Her plan almost worked. Had the *Kotsoteka*'s power systems been a little less damaged, or the Orion's shields a little weaker, the Starfleet ship could have punched through and damaged the raider's warp engines, eliminating any chance of it catching up to the fleeing convoy. But in the end, the *Kotsoteka* didn't have enough left. They'd protected their charges and taken out one ship – despite the lack of confirmation, Captain Wah's instincts told her they had – but destroying two of them all on her own was simply too tall an order for the wounded ship.

"The Orion's shields are down to ten percent," called Commander Kozuri. "But they still have an active warp signal."

"Our weapons?" asked Captain Wah, though she already knew the answer.

Kozuri gave his console a frustrated punch. "Backup power is down to ten percent. We are tuskless." An alert chimed on his console. "The Orion ship is starting to come about," he warned.

Captain Wah didn't hesitate. "Engineering, this is the bridge. Plan A has failed. Plan B is a go. Eject the core."

"Ejecting the warp core now," came the emotionless voice of Lieutenant Soval over the comm channel.

"Helm," called the Captain, and she saw the lieutenant stiffen a little. He and the rest of the crew knew what order was coming. "Rotate the ship. Ops, standby with the tractor beam. Commander Kozuri, transfer all available power to shields. All hands, brace for impact."

The *Kotsoteka* spun in space again, presenting her battle-scarred belly and the wide, flat bottom of its saucer section to the turning enemy ship. In a few seconds, the Orion ship would open fire, and the *Kotsoteka* – her shields weak, her warp core mid-breach – would become nothing more than free-floating atoms. But that was only if the Orions survived that long.

The *Kotsoteka*'s overloading warp core shot out of the stardrive section's emergency ejection hatch, glowing and arcing with angry energy, heading directly towards the Orion raider. The *Kotsoteka* gave it a hard push with its tractor beam, and it soared even faster across the open space between the two vessels. The Orion's weapon ports began to glow, but before its disruptor beams could fire, the core overloaded. A miniature sun bloomed halfway between the ships, unleashing a matter and antimatter explosion strong enough to shred the fabric of space itself.

Captain Wah watched the flickering viewscreen until the explosion grew so bright that it overwhelmed the *Kotsoteka* sensors. Alinda refused to look away, searching for any sign of the Orion ship's destruction. Just as the glare from the breach began to dim and the picture returned, she thought she spied another explosion blooming in the distance. But before she could be sure, the shockwave from the core explosion hit her ship like the hand of god, and Captain Wah knew no more.

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