

Like the Mist On the Green Mountain

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Like the Mist On the Green Mountain

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Summary

Solutions to problems, big and small. A scheme is carried out. The Giant of the Red Line prepares to shake down.

The Top

Chandra steps out onto the bridge. She smiles as she sees a familiar face waiting by the command chair. She holds out her hand. "Hello, Master Chief," she says. She eschews his snapping to attention and holds out her hand, gripping his with genuine pleasure. "I wondered when you would get aboard," she says.

Master Chief Science Technician (Archeology & Anthropology) James Adair gives a brief smile, but grips her hand warmly. A brief, small smile, but for him, it is the equivalent of a wide grin. She wants to pull him into a deep embrace, but knows that his reserve, not to mention Starfleet discipline would try to avoid. A smirk comes over his familiar, craggy features at her dilemma. She rolls her eyes.

"I was glad you were able to come and be my Command Master Chief," she says. "I think I'm going to need your help on this one, seeing how we're kinda betwixt and between."

"Border Dogs and Line Pukes," Adair says. "Helluva combination, Skipper."

"I know. And all the command positions were vacant, because they thought that they were going to be decommissioned. It's probably not helping that I'm filling those positions with people I pick."

He nods, his dark eyes knowing. "I know. That is your right. But it may be hard to swallow, with all of those Border Dogs.

"They're leaders, Jim," she says. "All of them, with the exception of an Ensign I'm bringing on to drive, have served in starships. They also all have bled with me before, except Commander Grayson, the engineer, and to a certain extent, my CMO, though she took a bat'leth wound to the arm on Leelix."

"That'll help." His face darkens a bit. She nods, then ushers him into the ready room. She pours him some coffee, knowing it is early and he doesn't drink.

He nods with approval. "Jamaican Blue Mountain," he says. "Pretty damned good. I won't ask how many favors that set you back."

He sits at the conference table, just across from her.

"Speak, Pah-wan," she says. He looks down at that title, a Deltos word that she had coined for him years ago, when she had been a buck ensign on the old *Republic*. He smiles at the memory. He had looked up the word. An old word meaning 'Peace-Warrior.' As good a title for any arch tech and enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

"How will this work? Who do I report to?"

"Me," she replies. "You report to me. I expect you to work with the XO, but ultimately, like her, you work directly for me." She feels her face harden. "Any officer gives you any trouble about that, let me know."

"I appreciate that, Captain. But I'd be a sorry senior crewmember if I let some snotnosed officer run over me. And I expect to work well with Commander McMurtry. I've already seen the cut of her jib."

"I sense a but, Chief," she says.

“Something I think you and she will have to deal with—her mostly. Your new science officer.”

Chandra exhales. “Lieutenant Daronex,” she says.

“You sound like you might’ve been expecting this.”

“Just not this soon. He’s a damned good scientist—he scienced our engines out of a tight spot on Leelix. But I’m not sure he’s cut out to be a leader. He’d probably be good as the ship’s astrophysicist. But Sciences Command said he was ready to be the Science Officer.”

“Does he have juice?”

Chandra shrugs. “He might. But that ain’t going to be my criteria for keeping him. Do you have a replacement?”

“Well, if I had my druthers, Lieutenant Commander Fonseca. I’m kinda partial to archeologists. But she already has a job as your Ops officer. Jiema would be my next choice. She’s actually overdue for a promotion to Lieutenant. She was senior to him as a j.g.”

“Jiema?”

“Jiema Trevor. She just goes by Jiema, in the manner of her mother’s people, the Awabakal of New South Wales in Australia. But there may be another snake in the grass in that department.”

Chandra knits her eyebrows together, then rubs the bat’leth scar absently. She waits for Adair to give voice to his suspicions. She notices him staring at the scar; she drops her hand from it.

“The Senior Chief Science Technician, Lade Ar’daoth. He’s a Tarkon from O’Ryan’s Planet. He thinks that the previous science officer ‘promised’ him a promotion to at least warrant officer.”

“Great,” Chandra says.

“Yeah. You and I both know, Skipper, that those promises aren’t worth the air it takes to give voice to them. He’s caused problems for Jiema before. He’ll eat Mr. Daronex alive.”

“Then he’ll need to go,” Chan says. She takes in Adair’s expression. “What?”

“It’s kind of complicated. He’s got a lot of loyalty on the ship among the crew, for someone who’s only been on the ship for a short time. He has, in the past, from what I gather, retaliated against others in the department and outside. He also has some connections among his people.”

Chandra shakes her head. “It’s always something. Then I may need you to keep an eye on him. I don’t know if Daronex will take kindly to it, but if you could do some of your mentoring magic on him.”

Adair sighs. “I should’ve retired,” he says.

“You’d be back in a week,” she says. “I do have an easier one for you, though. Somebody who’s already proven herself; she just needs some guidance and confidence.”

“Young Sinclair,” he says. “I’ve heard good things.”

“She’s got a lot of guts. And she’s spilled her own blood. But since Siobhan Lincolnton has transferred to another ship, she might be at sea a bit. No matter the outcome of her command pre-course, I’m going to put her in as even an unofficial command trainee.”

Adair is silent for a moment. “You see something in her, don’t you?” he finally asks.

“Not just her. Kaylin, who is now Saavik’s XO, Siobhan, and Decker. I see a lot of myself, as well as those others from my class in them.”

“Hopefully they won’t need to take the oath of celibacy or something with some of your mentoring,” he says straight-faced.

She grins sheepishly, letting him get the last word.

The Magnate

James Blackthorne watches as the denizens of the bar do their very best to destroy their livers or other impurity-processing organs. He sips his whisky, managing not to make a face at the well whisky.

Next to him, Nell Cavendish alternates between watching the crowd with wariness and watching him with amusement. Several times she starts to say something, but stops.

“Come on, Last Word. You’ve never been shy before.”

“So are you going to just lean into the the rich, scumbag collector and smuggler persona?”

“I don’t know. Maybe. But right now I’m hoping to contact an even bigger, richer scumbag collector and smuggler.”

“Tell me again why we’re here, drinking these shitty examples of the mixologist’s art?”

“Because Agon says so,” he replies. He grins at the anticipated eyeroll.

“And speaking of shitty,” she says.

“Maybe so. But he’s established a lot of contacts. And he’s got his reasons for not wanting to exactly stay on the up and up.”

She looks down. In spite of her personality, her eyes grow sad. “I know,” she whispers. “So what’s the scoop?”

“We need to try to make contact with a certain organization based on O’Ryan’s Planet. Apparently the main human in charge has quite the operation, even though he maintains his legitimate businesses.”

“The human in charge?”

“Yeah. Back in the late 22nd century, a n’er do well named Paddy O’Ryan and a few followers came across the world, known as Mid’la to the Tarkons and the Shamins, the two groups on the world. The Prime Directive wasn’t a thing back then, Paddy and his group actually wound up saving the Tarkons from the Orions, who had been plaguing them for decades, taking them as slaves and generally being assholes. So the Tarkons granted he and his descendants large land grants, as well as the status of co-ruler with the Tarkon Hegemon.”

“And how do the Shamin feel about this?”

Jamie takes another sip, gathering his thoughts. “They and the Tarkons don’t see eye-to-eye. They keep to themselves, although they occasionally flex their muscles a bit. Some of their priests stir things up occasionally. The Tarkons at one time exploited their territory, but O’Ryan worked with the Shamin to gain that land back for them.”

“And the land that O’Ryan’s family got title to?”

“They’ve made quite a bit of scratch here on agro-pharmaceuticals, as well as raw material for food processing. The current scion, or the ‘Descendent’ as he is known, a guy named Sullivan Jane, also has a shipbuilding facility in the outer parts of the system.”

“So he’s our scumbag?”

“That’s what Agon’s information says. Funds charities and all that, but also collects like a madman and has quite the little pipeline into Klingon and Romulan space. He’s probably the biggest ‘importer’ of Romulan ale in the Federation.”

“Then may the saints preserve his name. I’m thinking you’re wanting to see if you can get another route to the Praetor?”

“Yeah. Rumor has it that he may have some contacts with her retinue. I don’t know who, but I don’t think it’s the Tal Shiar asshole, Simv.”

“Then the husband? What’s his name?” Nell asks.

“Khav tr’Stalron,” he replies. “Commander-General in the Fleet. I could see him lining his pockets very easily.”

Nell is thoughtful for a moment. “Tell me more about Jane,” she says.

“He’s the son of a great-granddaughter of Paddy. He was the only heir. His father took him to Earth for an education. He’s Starfleet Academy trained, but didn’t stay in past his first term. Got an MBA, which is a rare thing these days. Even spent some time in a New Human enclave, before mommy’s family came calling on him to accept his ‘one true destiny’. Rumor has it that he left because he knocked up another member of the enclave, a Starfleet officer who’d been exposed to the group by her mother.”

“You paint such a nice picture, Jamie, my lad. So why are we here in the Triangle? O’Ryan’s, or Mid’la, as it should be called, is close but not quite in the Triangle. It’s also a member world of the Federation. In fact, one of the Shamin Priests is the Assembly member for them,” Nell says.

“Yeah. But it’s also a member world on the frontier. They—both the humans and the Tarkons— feel they need to do what they need to do to survive. So a lot of smuggling. I think that they’re closely allied with a slightly shady enterprise on Earth, that doesn’t shit in their nest there.”

Nell’s eyebrows raise.

“They call themselves the Chosen Men—no matter what gender is in control at the time. C thinks they are based in London, but their power base is somewhere else.”

“So we’re meeting Mr. Jane, or Lord Jane, or whatever?”

“Of course not. We’re meeting a go-between.”

“Any idea who?”

“Hello boys and girls,” says a voice that is at least familiar to Jamie.

He turns and narrows his eyes at the young woman standing there. She gazes at them both with dark bronze eyes, under hair the same color. Her Romulan features are dressed in a light green shade, indicative of her Orion heritage as well.

“Hello, Targsbane,” Jamie says. “So you’re in bed with Sullivan Jane?”

“Not literally. He’s not my type.”

“You mean not a pirate or other scumbag? At least openly?”

“I did sleep with you, Croft,” she says dryly.

“And it was the best time of your life, A’lanna,” he replies, ignoring Nell’s dangerous eyeroll.

“At least for two minutes,” she replies.

Jamie suddenly shoves Nell to the ground, turning the table over. A disruptor bolt strikes the table, blasting it apart. He can’t see who is firing at them, but has a brief vision of a tall man with dark skin and a bald head firing at whoever the hell was firing at them.

The Romulan Part of This Mess

Llara t’Rllallion, aierh te’nuhwir or the ‘First Among Equals of the Praetorate,’ sips her ale as her eyes play over the Deltan woman moving sinuously against the backdrop of the capital city. Beside her, her consort watches as well, but occasionally brings both eyes down to an official report on a reader.

Llara narrows her eyes as Major Simv tr’Ddelasu, her Tal Shiar ‘liaison’ walks in. He gives more than a brief look to the Deltan—Danara’s—body on display. Llara clears her throat, bringing his eyes back down to hers. He brings his fist to his chest in a salute, then paints what he would say is a respectful look on his features.

She isn’t convinced that the expression is respectful or sincere.

“Well?” she asks. Khav shifts his eyes to the Tal Shiar officer. A glance to him shows that his face is military-correct, as she tries to find any evidence that he and Simv might be up to something other than the occasional sharing of their bodies without her.

“I’ve had communication with our other contact in the Starfleet organization. He assures me that our efforts to subvert Section 31 are still in play.”

“And who is this contact?”

“My other sources have identified him as a lower-level officer working for one of their ancient Grand Admirals. He says that with a little pressure in the right place, he can get himself assigned to the head of their personnel division.”

Her eyebrow climbs to her hairline. “And this would be important how?”

“Their personnel officer is the former head of Special Operations, Admiral Harriman. He was transferred to that post after our agent was apparently discovered.”

Llara feels a stab of something at the mention of their now-dead agent, D’ania t’Sonrees. She isn’t sure that it is grief, or embarrassment at the agent being uncovered.

Simv pushes through with his report, unaware of her own slight inner turmoil. “He seems to be exercising a great deal of authority beyond his actual station. He has control and knowledge of many personnel decisions. My source tells me that there have been rumblings that he may start targeting Starfleet Intelligence itself.”

She ponders what Simv has told her. The being known only as the Prince to her intelligence operatives has been a thorn in her side for a long time. She takes a deep breath. “Very well, proceed. And the other matter?”

“We have yet to locate Megara’s servitor in Federation space. I’m not sure he is even alive, or under her control. He certainly hasn’t reported in to us.”

“He was given orders to submerge if he needs to. We’ll give him some more rope. But I won’t hesitate to see him strangling at the end of it, if he fails. It might just give me enough to see Megara mounted on the Remedy as well, under him. Or at the very least, to watch one of my Lemaskae lop her head off, if I have to give her quick death, because of her station.”

She looks over at Khav. His blue eyes meet hers. He gives a brief nod, then stands. Both of them ignore Simv; they don’t dismiss him as Danara finishes her dance.

They both follow her into the bedroom. Llara finally stops at the door and gives a brief jerk of her head to Simv.

The door closes behind all of them. The three musicians who had been playing for Danara’s dance look at each other in bewilderment.

Competition

Ensign Stevenson Bailey Turner the Third moves past the ancient commander who shows him into his grandfather’s office. Stevenson Bailey Turner the First rises from the easy chair, laying the PADD he had been working from down. He walks over, eschewing the cane by his chair, and brings his grandson into a tight embrace.

The younger Stevenson, called Bailey, rather than Steven, to differentiate from his grandfather, and his late Uncle Steve turns and brings his hand to his brow in salute at the other officer seated across from him. Grand Admiral Nogura Heihachiro narrows his eyes at the gesture, but updated Starfleet General Orders had increased the numbers of instances that saluting without a hat was allowed, as the number of occasions that the dress whites and hat were to be actually worn had been reduced to exactly two.

Federation Day and Academy graduations.

Nogura nods and gives a smile of welcome. “Hello, young Turner,” he says. He gets up with only a tiny bit of difficulty and extends his hand. “How’s the pre-course? I hear you’re up there.”

“I am, Grand Admiral,” he replies. “I think I’ll beat my competition out.”

Nogura looks at him without expression. “I wouldn’t bet against a Decker. She’s got good genes, the genes of a damned good starship

captain.”

Bailey nods respectfully and says nothing.

He watches as Nogura nods to his grandfather and walks out.

“I wouldn’t discount Nogura’s words, son,” Grandfather says. “He is a good judge of officers.”

“I’m not worried,” Bailey replies.

He sees his grandfather grit his teeth. “You’re good, Bailey,” Grandfather says. “But you’re not as good yet as you think you are. Decker Sinclair, unlike you, has actually commanded a ship in battle.”

“Yeah. Including one that she lost.”

The Grand Admiral’s temper explodes. “I cannot believe that a grandson of mine just said that about a serving officer, who has been decorated for bravery and brevetted to command of a ship, a few weeks after graduating the Academy. Are you still jealous that she got to be Cadet Captain?”

Bailey starts to say something but for once, thinks better of it.

“And that battle that you say she ‘lost’, she managed to save most of her crew. All while fighting to stay conscious with a concussion and a half-dozen or so broken ribs,” Grandfather says.

Bailey’s eyes widen at that. “I hadn’t heard that part,” he admits. “I didn’t know.”

“There’s a lot you don’t know. Like the limitations of your name.”

“Sinclair has a name, too. So does Martinez.”

“And neither one goes around reminding everyone of the fact.”

Bailey turns and walks out of the office sitting room.

As he does, he passes an officer, a lieutenant wearing a staff officer’s cords. When he later recalls the meeting, he remembers that the officer seems to be the youngest staff officer here, in his forties or so.

The Side Project

Decker stand and gazes at her project, her hands on her hips. To a bystander, it would appear that she is enraptured by the beauty of the ship. She turns to the woman next to her. A woman in her fifties, with dark hair, a white streak at the front of the mop, and amber eyes. She is clad in a bomber-monster, the short jacket version of the monster maroon that captains and above are authorized to wear. That she is a rank below that, doesn’t seem to phase her. She wears the blue-gray of sciences, with a social sciences pattern on the sleeve stripe.

“You’ve done incredible work, Ensign,” Commander Annamarie Troy says. “But I don’t think you’ll get her to fly again.”

Decker nods after a moment. “I figured. But I am trying to keep her out of the scrapyard,” she says.

Troy nods. “I think that I might be able to help you with that. I’ve got some space—a smaller dock, built for another scout that isn’t going to make it. The *Aerfen* has a storied history—especially the chapter you wrote. She’d be a fine addition to the Starfleet Museum.” She grows somber. “The problem is, I don’t have a transport budget. You’ll need to figure out how to get her there.”

Decker looks down. Troy smiles and says, “I’ll see what I can do to help, but you’re going to have to do most of the legwork.” Decker snaps to attention. Troy smirks at her, nodding in acknowledgement.

When she is alone, Decker takes off the field-green tunic and takes off the dark, long-sleeved undershirt, leaving her in a tanktop and the field trousers.

She walks up the ramp until she comes to the old CIC. A gangly human male is there, dressed as she is. “Hey, Captain,” he says.

Decker shakes her head. “I told you, Cheese, I’m not a captain anymore. I’m just an ensign. You just have to call me that, or ‘Mr. Sinclair’,” she says. “How’s it going?”

“Those fluidics have done the trick. The systems seem to be all online.”

“All except propulsion.”

Karl Havarti drops his head. “I understand. What’d the Curator say?”

“That we have to figure out how to get her to the Museum. She’s very interested.”

“Have you thought about asking your mom?”

She shakes her head emphatically. “No. I can’t. I need to do this on my own, without her or Chandra’s help.”

She turns and leaves. Karl smiles as he thinks about the specifics of that restriction.

Departure Stations

Kaylin watches as Saavik signs a PADD given to her by a yeoman. She moves over beside her chair, then steps down to take her place at the helm station. They hadn't yet been assigned a primary pilot or a navigator; she would be doubling as the helm officer, while a Navigational Tech 2nd was seated at the station to her right, his eyes staring straight ahead.

She glances back at the tactical station. Jade Salieri stands there, cool and collected.

The Comms Tech behind Saavik lifts her earpiece, then says, "Dock is signaling clear, Captain," he says.

Kaylin checks her status monitor. "All departments are buttoned up, Captain. We are, in all respects, ready for space."

"Very well. Technician Heinz, signal Starfleet Operations Main of our readiness for departure for our shakedown cruise." Kaylin can feel Saavik's eyes on the back of her head. "Mr. Stone-Hunter, do you have an idea for a shakedown cruise? Maybe two or three days or so?"

Kaylin turns around. "I do. But I think that we'll need to make a slight detour."

Saavik's right eyebrow goes up. "Oh? And what for?"

Kaylin keeps her expression even. "Perhaps some tractor work. Then some warp speed with a ship attached to the airlock. For our destination."

Saavik's eyebrow comes down. "Very well. You should test one of our backup, trainee helm officers. Perhaps Midshipman Akumba. I'd like my XO at her station."

She nods. "Aye, captain," she replies.

The Navigational Tech, fulfilling the role of Quartermaster's Mate when there is no navigation officer, takes a deep breath, exchanging a look with the Comms Tech.

A very large man of Asian ancestry exits the turbolift and takes up Kaylin's station, as she moves back to the Captain's left shoulder. She punches in her code to the status board on the railing.

Saavik looks back at her. "When we get back, have a chair installed to my left, and move the console down."

"I'd prefer to stay up here, Captain, if I may. Got a good view of everything."

Saavik gazes at her, then nods.

"Message from Starfleet Ops Main, Captain," the Comms Tech says.

"On speakers," Saavik replies easily. *As if she could reply any other way*, Kaylin thinks.

"*Titan*, this is Starfleet Operations. Authorization has come through from SPECOPS as to your shakedown cruise."

Saavik looks back at Kaylin again, then narrows her eyes. She shrugs imperceptibly.

"Very well, Operations," she says to the air. "*Titan* acknowledges."

Saavik looks at Akumba, then back at Kaylin. "Mr. Stone-Hunter, you have the conn."

Kaylin remembers a young Vulcan being told to 'take her out, Mr. Saavik.' The words echo over the years.

She doesn't think of the aftermath. Of her supposedly emotionless Vulcan now-captain gasping at the body of the young man, held in his uncle's arms.

Kaylin sends that memory away. "Clear all moorings," she says. "Hold station."

"Moorings cleared. Thrusters at station-keeping," Akumba repeats.

She closes her eyes as Saavik's voice cuts into her mind, with a distinctive lightness she had come to know.

"I'm anxious to see our destination," she says. "And what we'll be transporting as a 'tractor-training test'."

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