

Starship Mine

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Starship Mine

by [Beatrice Otter](#)

Summary

Enterprise needs to be evacuated for a baryon sweep, and Nyota's already running late, when she spots something suspicious. Good thing Captain Una Chin-Riley and Christine Chapel are still aboard!

Notes

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See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

"Last shuttle to Arkaria will be departing in one half-hour," the computer's voice said over the intercom. "If you will be delayed, please notify the shuttle *immediately*."

Nyota swore under her breath and broke into a trot. She *might* be able to finish up and get there in time, but it would be pushing it. Baryon sweeps, while periodically necessary to purge excess warp radiation, were fatal to unshielded living tissue. Everyone had to check out on leaving the ship so they could be sure everyone was off the ship before the sweep started. The shuttle pilot knew that she and Christine and a few others were still aboard handling the last of Medical's packing, but she didn't want to delay things.

The *Enterprise*, being the Starfleet flagship, was in high demand, and scheduling the time for necessary maintenance was always a challenge. They'd been badly overdue to purge the radiation which built up on the hull over long periods in warp drive. So when *Enterprise* had the time and was close to the Remmler Array, the premier baryon-maintenance facility on this side of the Federation, they were shoe-horned into an already full schedule. Nyota had spent the past several days fielding complaints from other ships about the interruptions to *their* schedules.

She turned a corner and saw a Vulcan in Remmler Array fatigues poking at a computer panel on the wall. He glanced at her. "Lieutenant, you should be on your way to the shuttle bay." He eyed her legs with appreciation before turning back to his panel.

"I know," she said. "What's the problem? We've been working with your crew for the last two days to get everything ready for the sweep, everything should be taken care of." Everything except the medical samples, that was. She really should offer to help him, as one of *Enterprise's* senior officers, but she didn't have time to do that *and* get Christine's samples.

"That is unnecessary," the Vulcan said, with one last glance at her legs. "I'll be done shortly."

"Right," Nyota said, and took off at a jog. She'd never been ogled by a Vulcan before, but she supposed there was a first time for everything.

In Bio Lab 2, she loaded equipment and samples on the cart as quickly as she could without messing up the connections to the portable containment unit's power supply.

She finished, double-checked her work, and maneuvered the cart out into the corridor just as a familiar figure in civilian garb turned the corner. "Christine! I thought—oh." It was a *different* familiar figure than the one she'd first thought. "Sorry, Captain, you look a lot like Nurse Chapel. Can I ask why you're here, as we make our way down to the shuttle bay?"

"They just finished with the *Da-Teplan*," Captain Una Chin-Riley said, joining her. "I wanted to say hello to the old girl before we left, but some minor personnel emergencies came up and I got delayed until the last minute."

"Nothing too bad, I hope," Nyota said.

"No, just a series of things coming to a head," the captain said. She eyed the cart Nyota was pushing. "I would have thought samples would be removed early in the evacuation, and handled by science officers."

Nyota grimaced. "It wasn't supposed to *need* to be evacuated; these samples aren't terribly reactive to the sweep, and Bio Lab 2's containment field should have been enough to protect them. But then the field emitters started failing two hours ago, and by then three quarters of the crew had already left."

"And they probably didn't want to confuse things by bringing people *back* up when the ones still aboard could handle it," Captain Chin-Riley said with a nod.

"Nurse Chapel was going to do it, but then there was a problem with the sickbay shutdown, and she knew I was still on board, so she asked me."

"Nurse Chapel—do I know her?" The captain cocked her head with a frown.

"No," Nyota said. "She joined the *Enterprise* about six months after you left for your own command. She looks enough like you to be your blonde sister."

"Well, I don't have any relatives in Starfleet," Captain Chin-Riley said. It was odd to think of her that way; most of the time they'd served together on *Enterprise*, she'd gone by 'Number One.' But she wasn't a first officer any longer, and so the pun on her first name (Una) no longer applied.

A Vulcan woman in the Array's jumpsuit came into view around the corridor's curve. She frowned at them. "You should be on the shuttle already." Her jumpsuit didn't quite fit, too long at the wrists and too short at the ankles, with a slight pucker over the breasts where it was just slightly too small. Vulcans were usually so precise about their tailoring.

"I know, we're sorry for the delay," Nyota said. "There was a problem with the containment field in Bio Lab 2, we had to do some last-minute changes to plan. You should have gotten the notification?"

"I did," the Vulcan said, with more than a hint of disdain. "You're still late."

"We're on our way now," Captain Chin-Riley said.

As they passed the Vulcan, headed toward the cargo turbolift at the end of the corridor, Nyota shook her head. You didn't see many Vulcans out this side of the Federation, and there hadn't been any on the team working with the *Enterprise* crew to lock down the ship. And now she'd seen two in only half an hour, both of them ... not what she'd expect. Vulcans weren't identical any more than any species was, but still.... She glanced back, but the Vulcan had passed out of sight. "Were there any Vulcans on the team that handled the *Da-Teplan*?"

"No," the captain said. "But they do have more than one team."

"There weren't any on the team that was working on the *Enterprise*, either," Nyota said. There'd have been gossip about it, especially if one of them had been ogling people, and as head of Communications Nyota heard all the gossip. "I met another Vulcan just before I got to Bio Lab 2."

"Huh." Captain Chin-Riley stopped at the next computer terminal on the wall and punched in her access code as a Starfleet captain. "Computer, how many Vulcans work at the Remmler Array?"

"No Vulcans are currently employed by the Remmler Array," The computer intoned.

"Are there any Vulcans employed by Starfleet stationed on Arkaria?" the captain continued.

"No Vulcans employed by Starfleet are stationed on Arkaria."

"We'd better call this in," Nyota said. "It could be nothing, but—"

"I've read the report on *Enterprise's* encounter with the Romulan ship in the Neutral Zone," the captain said grimly. "They could be Romulans." She punched in a code to connect her to the ship's communications system.

The terminal squealed and went dark. Nyota glanced down the corridor and saw that all the terminals in view had done the same. That was *not* a planned shutdown. It could be some freak accident ... or it could be something more sinister.

"Do you have a communicator on you?" Nyota asked.

"No," the captain said.

"Let's get out of here," she said, grabbing Captain Chin-Riley's arm. "See if we can find a terminal that's working." It was probably nothing, and a quick call to the Array would clear up the confusion. Still. Better safe than sorry.

They abandoned the cart and sprinted down the corridor, ducking through a lab that had two entrances to come out in another corridor.

The computer terminals in this corridor were out, too, which shouldn't have happened if the shutdown they'd witnessed was an accident. The systems were shielded so that surges in one terminal couldn't spread to the whole network. "They're not supposed to be *able* to shut down the communications system or the computer until all personnel are confirmed off the ship and the last shuttle has left," Nyota said. "There are safety interlocks."

"A targeted EM pulse at the right place would do it," the captain said grimly. "She might have heard us talking, and signaled a compatriot to

trigger it."

"If you aimed it right and kept it small enough, it wouldn't even destroy the chips, just kick the breakers over," Nyota said. "But you'd have to have control of both the bridge and the main computer core."

The captain stopped at an access panel for the Jeffries tubes, and popped it off. "If there really are hostiles aboard, let's not make ourselves easy to find."

Nyota slid in and headed for the nearest junction at the fastest crawl she could manage. Captain Chin-Riley followed, pausing only long enough to close the panel back up.

"I really hope we're just being paranoid," Nyota said once they'd reached the junction.

"Did you do a database synchronization when you arrived at Arkaria?"

"Of course, Captain," Nyota said. It was standard procedure whenever they stopped at a Federation planet or station.

"So either the Remmler Array's staff is completely incompetent at keeping their personnel lists up to date—which Starfleet Security will be *very interested to know*, given all the classified information the Array's employees have access to—or the two 'Vulcans' you saw aren't actually Remmler personnel. But they're *impersonating* them on a starship that's been evacuated and shut down, which makes it a perfect target for anything from espionage to sabotage. At best, they're home-grown Federation criminals wearing fake ears. At worst ... they're Romulans." The captain sighed. "Question is, what now? They probably have the shuttle secured already, and even if not they'll be expecting us to head to it."

"The transporters are already shut down," Nyota said. The Heisenberg compensators reacted weirdly with baryon beams; it took special precautions to shut down the transporters in such a way that they'd take no damage during the sweep, even with diverters to protect them.

"Can you jury-rig a communicator that can reach one of the other ships?"

Nyota thought for a second. The communicators had the reach, but were designed to be routed through the ship's communication system. In port like this, any ship that picked up the signal would likely ignore it on the assumption that if it were meant for them, the hail would be coming through the ship's communications array. She'd have to spoof the metadata so that it looked like it *was*. "Yes, but I'll need a functional computer—or at least a tricorder—to do it."

"And everything's been shut down."

"Medical tricorders are probably the easiest to boot up quickly, they're designed for it in case of emergency," Nyota said. "And we should stop by Sickbay and let Christine know what's happening, anyway, and I doubt they're expecting us to head *there*."

"Do you know who else might still be aboard?" the captain asked. "And where they might be? If we have to retake the ship, it'll be better to have more people."

"I'm sorry, Captain Chin-Riley, I didn't look at the evacuation roster closely enough to know," Nyota said.

"You can call me Una," the captain said. "Tell me if you remember anybody still on board. Meanwhile, Sickbay it is."

As they crawled and climbed through the bowels of the ship, Nyota had plenty of time to contemplate. If this were all a false alarm, she'd feel really stupid. It was possible the Array's crew were bad at database maintenance; it was also possible that the computer failure at that point was just an error, something that had gone wrong as they rigged everything for shutdown and put field diverters in the computer core to protect it. If that were true, in a few hours she'd be in a bar on Arkaria while her crewmates laughed at her paranoia.

But she'd rather take the chance of a few hours of good-natured ribbing, than assume everything was fine and let Romulans get the ship.

When they reached the access panel that was below one of the bio-beds in sickbay, Nyota popped the fastenings as quietly as she could and swung the panel out just enough to take a cautious glance around.

Which gave her the warning she needed to duck back in time to avoid the phaser blast that neatly hit the opening. "Christine, it's me, Nyota, don't shoot!" she yelled.

There was a pause from inside sickbay. "Show yourself," Christine said warily.

Nyota pushed the panel open further. "I see you've figured out we're in trouble," she said, sticking her head out. "It really is me. And a friend."

"All right, you can come out," Christine said, sagging with relief. "I'm glad you're here. Starfleet's 'Basic Training for Nurses' didn't cover what to do when there's trouble and you're alone on the ship." She had the beginnings of an impressive shiner, but her eyes were clear.

Nyota climbed out of the tube, straightening her skirt as she rose. A Romulan in the Remmler Array jumpsuit—not one of the ones she'd already seen—was unconscious on the biobed next to her, the restraints for hostile patients firmly detaining them. "Nice work," she said, nodding at the Romulan.

Una clambered out of the tube behind her. "Christine, this is Captain Una Chin-Riley of the *Da-Teplan*. She used to be first officer of the *Enterprise* under Captain Pike."

Christine looked at Una and did a double-take.

Una looked Christine up and down. "I see what you mean," she told Nyota. "Forget sisters, we could be *twins*."

"It's a pleasure to meet you," Christine said. "But if you don't mind my asking, how come you're here? And what the hell is going on?"

"I was on a quick nostalgia tour when I ran into Nyota," Una said.

"I was curious about a couple of Vulcans I'd seen, so I asked the computer about them," Nyota said. "There are no Vulcans working on the Array. That's when the computer crashed. We thought they might be Romulans, so we headed here to collect you and some supplies we needed."

"Romulans?" Christine said. "Well, I suppose that makes sense. I assumed she was a Vulcan." She crossed her arms, hugging herself tightly.

"What happened here?" Una asked.

"I was in the back office hooking up the diverter when the computer went down. Which it's not supposed to do before the last shuttle is away and everyone is confirmed off the ship," she said, sounding annoyed. But Nyota could hear the edge of fear underneath. "And then I heard someone rummaging around out in sickbay, and it sounded like they were trying to force the secure meds storage cabinet open. Since there probably weren't any security officers left on the ship, or anyone to call for help, I grabbed a hypospray with a sedative that works on most species on my way to check. It was her." She nodded to the Romulan on the biobed. "I asked what she was doing, and she didn't have a good answer. I told her to go away or I'd report her, and she hit me. So I jabbed her in the leg with the hypospray."

"Good thinking," Una said. "You kept a very cool head and reacted quickly and appropriately."

"Thank you," Christine said. "What do we do now? Head to the shuttle bay? What if there are more of them?"

"There are at least two others," Nyota said.

"Probably more than that, if they have a plan for any major sabotage before the Array powers up and starts the sweep," Una said. "And there's a good chance they've either secured the shuttle already, or are waiting for us there. With the transporters down, they're probably counting on the shuttle for their own exit."

"That or they have some kind of small craft hidden somewhere nearby, to come beam them out when they're done," Nyota said.

"That would blow their cover, if they were hoping to slip away without being noticed," Una said.

"This is all fascinating," Christine said, "but what do we do now? Can you fix the communications system? How do *we* get off before the sweep starts?"

"I can't fix it from here, but hopefully I won't need to. I'm going to need one of your medical tricorders to modify a communicator to hail the array," Nyota said. "Then we can report in and call for help."

"They can't start the sweep until everyone is confirmed off the ship, so even if you can't make it work, they'll send someone to investigate when we don't make it to the shuttle," Una said.

Nyota was about halfway done writing the software patch for the communicator when a jolt knocked her out of her focused concentration. "Was that—"

"The impulse engines coming online," Una confirmed grimly.

A low hum started up, one Nyota was so used to she almost didn't hear consciously any longer.

"And that's the warp drive," Christine said.

"This isn't sabotage, it's a hijacking," Una said.

"And every ship in the area is either in the process of shutting down or starting back up," Nyota said. "Nobody will be able to give chase for a day or two, at least."

"*Da-Tapan* had her full crew complement on board, and we were ahead of schedule in rebooting everything," Una said. "She'll be able to head out in an hour, maybe two, I'd guess, but that'll still give the Romulans too much of a head start. Once they get out of sensor range, they can change course and there would be too many possible destinations for Starfleet to cover. We'll have to retake the ship ourselves, or at least stop it from going anywhere."

"I can patch you up if you get hurt, but most of my combat training was in how to stay out of the line of fire," Christine said.

"How well do you shoot?" Una asked.

Christine shrugged. "Well enough to qualify on both hand phasers and rifles, but not much more than that."

"If nothing else, you can lay down covering fire," Una said. "Don't suppose you know who else might still be aboard?"

"Sorry," Christine said.

"Do we have time to hit the armory?" Nyota said. "I'd feel better going up against Romulans with heavier firepower than the phasers in the emergency kit in Sickbay."

Una shook her head. "Too much chance it's guarded or boobytrapped," she said. "And if we tip them off that we're going on the offensive, then everything else will be ten times harder. Best thing to do would be to take engineering, if we can. That way, even if we can't control the ship

ourselves, we can at least prevent them from taking it anywhere."

"You can shut down just about anything from Engineering," Nyota said. "Including the ship's anti-intruder defenses, if they try to use them against us. And if they've brought the computer up even in a limited way, they *have* to have full access at the engineering terminals."

"Has Scotty made any major modifications to the layout or defenses of Engineering?"

"As a matter of fact, he has." Nyota smiled. "A few months ago, an officer in an altered state barricaded himself in Engineering and they had to cut through the doors to get in. Scotty made a back door through the security locks for the department heads so that if it happens again, we can get through more easily."

"And you're head of Communications, so you have access to that back door," Una said. "And because it's not standard, the Romulans will have no way of knowing about it. Alright, here's what we're going to do."

Nyota kept one eye on the tricorder's timer function, and one eye on the life signs map of Engineering. This wasn't exactly what the medical tricorder's scan function was designed for, but it worked nonetheless. It was a pity the range was so limited.

There were five people in Engineering, with biosigns that indicated they were probably Romulan. Two humans against five Romulans were not good odds, even with surprise on their side.

She wondered how Christine was doing. It was unnerving to have their least-experienced person off by themselves, but with only three people, that's how it worked out. The heavy fighting would be in Engineering itself, once they breached it; that's where she and Una had to be. The distraction that might give them a chance to get into Engineering while the Romulans were focused elsewhere didn't have to last long, and Christine could disappear back into the Jeffries tubes quickly from the firing spot they'd picked out for her, once she'd gotten the Romulans' attention.

Nyota shook her head. Christine was a competent officer and could take care of herself. Nyota needed to keep her mind on her *own* part of the plan.

The countdown reached zero, and ... nothing happened. No sounds of phaser fire, no movement of Romulans on the tricorder's screen.

Nyota bit her lip. It was probably nothing, Christine was probably still getting into position. They *had* communicators which Nyota had modified to work independently of the ship's communication system, but they didn't know how well the Romulans could use the ship's internal scanners. If they knew how to run the communications board, any communicator use would show right up whether or not the calls were routed through the computer.

A loud *boom* reverberated through the space. That would be the phaser they'd rigged to overload. Christine should have placed it far enough away that it wouldn't damage Engineering's blast doors, but close enough to look like that was only a fluke.

A high-pitched whine started up, and a slightly lower pitch responded—phasers and disruptors, trading shots.

Nyota gripped her phaser in one hand, but kept her eyes glued to the tricorder screen.

Movement. Three of the five Romulans in Engineering were moving towards the main doors. Nyota tapped Una's leg.

Una swung silently out of the Jeffries tube into the empty maintenance shop. Nyota set down the tricorder and followed.

Una rounded the corner into Main Engineering with a flying leap, firing as she went. Nyota poked her head around and laid down covering fire. In the confusion, she wasn't sure whose shots hit, but two Romulans went down.

Una had made it to cover and was laying down heavy fire. Nyota kept shooting, ducking back into cover randomly to make herself a less easy target to hit. The Romulans were shooting back, but sparingly; that was the benefits of phasers over disruptors. With phasers set to stun, it didn't matter if their shots went wild. But if a disruptor blast hit something critical, it could knock it out completely. And the Romulans needed Engineering intact if they were going to steal the ship.

She'd lost track of a Romulan, she realized—two were down, two were firing back, where was the fifth—

A hand grabbed her wrist when she popped around the corner for some more shots. Nyota launched herself forward, trying to catch her attacker off balance. It didn't *quite* work, but it did put her in position to sweep his legs out from under him. They went down in a tumble, and Nyota dug an elbow into his side just below the ribcage. It was a critical spot in Vulcans, and apparently in Romulans, too, because he grunted and jack-knifed around to protect it.

A scream distracted her, almost fatally, because she didn't see him bring out a knife. She just saw the hand coming at her and struck out at it, getting sliced for her trouble. With the adrenaline, she couldn't even feel it.

She had to end this. In a contest of endurance, any Vulcanoid could beat her easily. She dropped the phaser and twisted her arm to break the Romulan's grip on her wrist, then eeled around to get a knee in striking distance of his face. She drove a knee up with all her might, breaking his nose.

Nyota rolled away, grabbed the phaser, and shot him. She dove back into cover, but ... there were no more shots. She glanced around. The Romulans were all down.

Una was leaning against a wall pressing a hand to her side. There was a lot of blood. If she'd been hit dead-on by a disruptor beam, she'd be dead, but maybe she'd only been grazed. "I think Engineering is secure," she said hoarsely.

Nyota nodded, and reached for her communicator. "Christine, we did it, but we need you immediately." She headed to the main doors and opened them, phaser at the ready.

Christine darted through the door as soon as it was open, medkit in one hand and phaser in the other. "You're hurt!" she said.

"Una's worse," Nyota said, and closed the door, sealing it back up with her command codes.

Christine crossed the room to Una and started pulling equipment out of her kit. Nyota ignored them and took a seat at one of the consoles, putting pressure on the wound to staunch the bleeding. *Now* she could feel it, and she gritted her teeth at the pain. She kept her phaser in easy reach and one eye cocked towards the door.

She glanced down at the panel. This was not the one she needed. Neither was the next one. But the third gave her access to the warp drive's emergency shut-down, and she sighed in relief as they dropped back into normal space. Nyota glanced over at Christine and Una, but the best way to help them was to focus on her job.

What next? She forced herself to think through the adrenaline that was still flooding through her. Automated intruder defenses. That was on another panel, the first one she'd started at. A few minutes of poking showed that while some of the computer's functions were up and running, most weren't ... and that included the automated intruder defenses. There were manual ones, but you had to be in either Main Engineering or the environmental plant to use them, and Engineering could shut them down completely. Nyota did so.

It was a sure bet the Romulans knew they were here now, so there was no point in avoiding communications. Nyota pulled out the communicator strapped to her hip, and sent a general hail throughout the ship. No answer, which wasn't surprising; most people didn't carry communicators with them when they were aboard, because the consoles were everywhere and almost as convenient. But it did mean they couldn't link up with whoever else was still aboard.

Then she started poking at the main computer. It was a *mess*. Whatever the Romulans had done to it was quick, dirty, and nasty. The good news was that the Romulans weren't going to be able to do much with it. The bad news was, neither was *she*. Not without a full team of computer techs to manually repair the linkages.

She couldn't use internal scanners; she needed the tricorder she'd left in the Jeffries tube to tell whether there were any Romulans close by. But she couldn't leave the main doors unguarded.

Nyota swore as she realized the hatch they'd used to access the maintenance shop wasn't sealed. They'd sealed the Jeffries Tubes behind them as they went; it would take a lot of time (or firepower) to break through that way, and the Romulans wouldn't want to risk damaging the equipment in the tubes. But it was still a vulnerability they couldn't afford.

"Christine?" she called. "Can you watch the doors for a bit while I go seal the hatches?"

"I'm a bit busy," Christine said. "Disruptor damage proliferates, and I've only just got it stopped." She was furiously alternating between implements as she worked on her patient.

"I can," Una said grimly. She was white with pain and blood loss, but she was still sitting upright against the wall, with a phaser clutched in her hand.

"Okay," Nyota said. She wasn't convinced Una could do it, but the hatches had to be sealed. She grabbed her phaser and stood, wincing as her wounded arm throbbed at the motion. She went back to the maintenance room and into the Jeffries tube. Fortunately, the tricorder was near the hatch and she didn't have to crawl to get it. She slung it over her shoulder and closed the hatch, sealing it with her command codes. Then she sealed the maintenance room for good measure, and all the other doors that she could. No point taking chances.

"We're secure back there," she said as she emerged into main engineering. "And they can't use the intruder defenses against us, and the computer is still mostly down."

"Can we use the intruder defenses against them?" Una asked.

Nyota shrugged. "Maybe. I'm not as familiar with the manual systems, it might take me a bit to figure it out. I thought my next priority should be communications."

"Do that," Una said. "Distress signal first, then intraship communications to see if we can find out if there are any other crew or *actual* Remmler teams aboard."

"What about that wound in your arm?" Christine said. "I'll take care of it, now that Captain Chin-Riley is stable."

A few minutes with the protoplaser had Nyota's arm good as new, and she headed back to the control panels to see what could be done for communications from here. She wasn't optimistic; most communications required the computer to function.

"Do we have any way of finding out how many Romulans might be aboard?" Christine asked. She was still working on Una, but slower, taking time to be thorough now that the first danger was past.

"No, but there can't be *that* many," Una said. "How would they have snuck them all into Arkaria and into the base? It's a big and busy place, with ships coming and going all the time, but going from 'no Vulcans' to 'lots of Vulcans' overnight would be noticed."

"I'd like to know how come we don't have better security precautions, now that we know Romulans can pass for Vulcans," Nyota said.

"Our scanners can't differentiate between Vulcans and Romulans," Christine said. "They're too alike. So you couldn't automate it or just handle it with scanners."

"And we can't discriminate against every Vulcan and Vulcanoid in the Federation because they happen to look like our old enemies," Una said.

Nyota sighed. "Things would be so much simpler if there *was* a physical difference we could scan for."

"How's the communications coming along?" Una asked. Christine had finished working on her, and was seated next to her against the wall, with her tricorder in one hand and a phaser in the other, medkit open and ready for use between them.

"Communications aren't looking good," Nyota said. She glanced at the tricorder to make sure there were no other people in range. Christine would be focused on Una's vital signs, not the possibility of attack. "Engineering doesn't have direct access to the physical equipment, it all goes through the computer banks. Which I can't fix from here. The closest direct physical access to any of the communications systems is the deflector dish on Deck 19—"

"—but that's right next to the computer array, and they almost certainly have someone stationed there," Una said with a grimace. "We know they've been there, they had to be to shut down the main computer."

"If we do any moving, it should be to sickbay," Christine said. "Captain, you need more care than I can give you here. I can keep you alive, but even moving you to Sickbay would be chancy without the lifts which we can't use because we'd be sitting ducks."

"Engineering is more defensible than sickbay," Una said, "and even if we can't get any systems up and running, we need to make sure the Romulans can't use them either. It's a waiting game; by now, the *Da-Taplan* has to be on its way. We couldn't have gotten too far out of sensor range in the time we were at warp; they should find us before too long."

"Hopefully, the Romulans won't manage to cut the doors down between now and then," Christine said. She brightened. "But they can't possibly do it any quicker than Scotty did over Psi 2000, so we've got a while."

"Is there anything else we can do while we wait?" Una asked. She shifted and grimaced. It was a bit worrying how pale she was. "Turn on the anti-intruder defenses?"

"I wouldn't recommend that," Christine said. "Without the computer, all we can do is flood the entire ship with anesthetizing gas ... and it wasn't designed to take out Vulcans. Or Romulans. We'd knock out any crew still aboard for sure, but I couldn't guarantee it would do much to our hijackers."

"Let's not do that then," Una said.

There was a silence as they all tried to think of something. Nothing came to mind that would be worth the risk. If they were further from rescue, or had a crew of trained and uninjured people, there were many things they could do. But as it stood, the smart thing was to wait for rescue.

Una made a low noise. Christine scanned her again, but took no action.

"Not going to lie, Nurse, even with the painkiller you gave me, this wound hurts like a bitch."

"You should be lying down in a biobed," Christine said. "What do you expect? Disruptors are nasty weapons."

"A distraction to take my mind off the pain would be really helpful," Una said. "Any good stories about what's happened around here since I've been gone?"

Nyota checked the tricorder again while she thought. Nobody but the three of them was in range of scanners. "Well, the mission to Psi 2000 had some really funny bits," if you ignored the fact that they'd almost died. But that was true of a lot of Starfleet stories.

Nyota told the funny and exciting parts of that particular incident. By the time she was finished telling how Spock and Scotty had managed a cold-restart of the engines with a controlled matter-antimatter implosion in under half an hour, there were Romulans outside the doors.

This was the hard part, not the actual fighting, Nyota reflected as she wiped a sweaty palm on her skirt.

The Romulans had been using some sort of heavy equipment on the main doors to Engineering for the last ten minutes. They weren't through, yet, and wouldn't be for some time; whatever they were using wasn't up to the task.

So they sat behind cover, phasers at the ready, waiting for the Romulans to break in and hoping rescue would get here first.

There were only two Romulans, and three of them. But Una was the best shot they had and she was seriously wounded.

"You know, I almost wish we could open the doors on them and shoot them, instead of waiting for them to get through on their own," Christine said.

"Bad idea," Una said.

"I know," Christine said. "I just don't like waiting without something to do."

"Who does?" Nyota said.

"*Da-Taplan to Captain Chin-Riley.*" It was a general hail; the *Da-Taplan* couldn't know which communicator was with which person.

Christine gasped. Nyota closed her eyes and sagged against the wall in relief.

Una moved a hand and winced. "Nurse, can you get my communicator out?"

Christine pulled out her own communicator and flipped it open, holding it up to Una's mouth.

"Chin-Riley here," she said. "It's good to hear your voice. Myself, Lieutenant Uhura, and Nurse Chapel are barricaded in Main Engineering, with two Romulans outside trying to get through the doors."

"We'll beam in a security team right away, sir. Do you have any other tactical information?"

"Main computer's down, and there should be a Romulan restrained and sedated in Sickbay," Una said. "Other than that, I don't know."

"Captain Chin-Riley has a disruptor wound to her torso," Christine said. "She's stable, but she'll need to go directly to sickbay."

"Acknowledged," *Da-Taplan's* communications officer said. "We'll have a medical team standing by in the transporter room."

A high whine and a bright light filled Engineering. Six people materialized in the center of the room, phasers drawn; Captain Kirk and Spock and Doctor McCoy were in front, with three people in Support Services red who must have been from *Da-Taplan's* crew.

Nyota stood to greet them.

"Thank you for saving my ship, Captain, Lieutenant, Nurse," Captain Kirk said with a smile.

"What took you so long?" Una asked, lips twisting in what was probably supposed to be a smirk. She grimaced as Doctor McCoy knelt down beside her, tricorder out, and began trading medical details with Christine in a low voice.

Kirk shrugged. "We got here as quickly as we could. You have a fine engineering staff, my compliments." He gestured to two of the people he'd brought, and they went to secure the doors. One of the newcomers had already headed toward a console and sat down to work.

"It is agreeable to see you all alive and in possession of the ship, Captain Chin-Riley, Nurse Chapel," Spock nodded to Nyota, "Lieutenant Uhura."

"It's *very* agreeable to see you too, Mister Spock," Nyota said, and smiled at him.

"Jim, we should get the captain back to her ship," Bones said. "Nurse Chapel did an amazing job, but Captain Chin-Riley should be flat on her back recovering for a while. And Chapel and Uhura should be checked out, too."

In deference to Una's injuries, they held the debriefing in *Da-Taplan's* sickbay. By the time *Enterprise* was secure and the last of the Romulans in custody, both Doctor McCoy and the *Da-Taplan's* chief medical officer agreed she was well enough to sit up in bed, though they weren't going to discharge her just yet. Captain Kirk, Spock, Doctor McCoy, Christine, and Nyota gathered around Una's bed, with a yeoman to take notes.

It didn't take that long to detail their experiences and actions between realizing something was wrong and the *Da-Tapan's* arrival. When everything was recorded, the yeoman was dismissed.

"What I want to know is, how the hell did they get through the Remmler Array's security in the first place?" Una asked.

Captain Kirk winced. "They came in as crew on a small Vulcan ship in need of a Baryon scan," he said. "Once their ship was evacuated and locked down and in the holding pattern, they simply walked into the base's laundry facilities and grabbed Remmler Array utility suits. And from there, they simply walked wherever they wanted. Nobody asked them to show ID or log in to the systems or subjected them to any security measures, because they looked like they belonged."

"Even though there aren't any Vulcans stationed on Arkaria?" Nyota asked.

Kirk shrugged. "Everyone thought they were new personnel."

"It sounds like they don't need new security procedures, they just need to follow the ones they *have*," Una said sourly.

"Indeed," Spock said. "Quite a lot of people are going to have unpleasant questions to answer, and there will be mandatory security refresher courses for some time to come."

"But how could they have known the *Enterprise* was going to be there?" Christine said. "We didn't know the *Enterprise* was going to go in for a baryon sweep until two weeks ago, and that's not enough time for them to have gotten a crew and a ship in place."

"They were looking for targets of opportunity," Kirk said. "Starfleet vessels come here for maintenance pretty regularly. They were planning on absconding with whatever ship happened to be evacuated at the right time for them to slip on board, and got lucky."

"Well, we were lucky too, that Captain Chin-Riley and Uhura and Christine were still aboard," Bones said. "The three of them took on a crack team of ten Romulan hijackers and won."

"Lieutenant Uhura and Nurse Chapel will be getting commendations," Kirk said. "I can't exactly put a fellow captain in for a commendation, but my thanks will be noted in my report."

Una laughed. "That's fine, Kirk. It was nice to see the *Enterprise* again ... and I guess it wouldn't have really been the *Enterprise* if there wasn't *some* weird and dangerous emergency when you least expected it. But if *Da-Tapan* is ever in the same boat, I expect you to return the favor."

"Of course," Kirk said gallantly.

"Lieutenant Uhura," Spock said, "if you are up to returning to duty, your help will be invaluable. It is my intention to begin repairing the damage to the computer core as we are towed back to Arkanis, and your skills would greatly accelerate the process."

"I'm up for it, I'm just dreading finding out what they did to our beautiful hardware," Nyota said mournfully.

"Indeed," Spock intoned. "It will be painful to see."

"You two sound like Scotty moaning about his engines," Christine said.

Nyota threw her hand to her forehead and staggered dramatically. "Ach! Me puir wee bairns!" she intoned in a parody of Scotty's accent.

Everyone laughed.

End Notes

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