

The New Frontier

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The New Frontier

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Summary

"It's tribble. WE'RE IN TRIBBLE SPACE." - Literary Challenge 64.1: In the early 25th century, after installing a new scanning system at Deep Space 9, the U.S.S. Phoenix-X triggers a phenomenon that sends it into an alternate universe.

Notes

Author's notes: This was written in May 2014 as part of the Star Trek Online Forums Literary Challenge #64.

Literary Challenge #64, Prompt #1: Your Captain and Crew have been on assignment near the Bajoran Wormhole for the last several weeks testing new scanning equipment placed in your Deflector Dish by the engineering crew at DS9. This new technology was designed by the joint efforts of the Federation Science Counsel, the Bajoran Center for Science, and the Cardassian Union Science Ministry.

While scanning the wormhole, an EPS conduit explodes in your Deflector Control room. A massive power surge bursts from your Deflector Dish, causing the wormhole to fluctuate and envelop your ship. After a bright flash of energy, your instruments indicate that your ship has emerged into a section of space that is completely unrecognizable. But this is no ordinary "space." It appears to be unlike anything you have ever encountered before...

Literary Challenge #64

"The New Frontier"

The *Prometheus*-class U.S.S. *Phoenix-X* undocked from Deep Space 9 and approached the empty space where the Bajoran Wormhole was situated.

"Excellent work, crew," Captain Seifer complimented. "This has been much more successful than our delivery-spill of post-classic era Kahn wigs over the Bolian capital, last week."

Armond turned from the tactical console. "Sir, you wanted me to warn you when you were *speaking too soon*? Well, that is a full-time job that I just cannot execute."

"Shouldn't we be bantering about our latest mission?" Kayl interrupted from ops. "We're supposed to fulfill at least 20 hours of exposition a week."

Seifer smirked. "Obviously that's what progress reporting is for."

"Speaking of which," Chief Engineer Kugo started. "Our latest modifications to the deflector dish have been quite successful. The work the Federation Science Counsel, Bajoran Center for Science and Cardassian Union Science Ministry did was more than exemplary."

Armond nodded. "It was like a science explosion in the Deflector Control Room. You couldn't get a word in edgewise about anything tactical or engineering at all. I didn't want to report this earlier, but the Deep Space 9 Chief Engineer slapped me in the face for trying."

"Oh, that just means he likes you in his culture-- Whatever species he is? I keep referring to him as just Alien," Kayl admitted.

Seifer nodded. "Yeah, he told me was okay with that. As for the over-enthused science talk, do you think there is any chance of that affecting the EPS conduits?"

"I don't see how, since talking and the electro-plasma system are completely unrelated," Kugo replied.

The Captain laughed. "No, you're right. And our testing of this new scanning equipment isn't likely to purvey any adverse episodic plots either."

"Sir! There has been an EPS conduit explosion in the Deflector Control Room!" Armond exclaimed, suddenly. "Suggest we brace ourselves for a Betazoid-woman's scorn!"

Seifer clenched his fist and hit the arm of his chair. "Dammit, I knew I should have went to med-school. But, noooooo, that non-corporeal being that feeds off my brain's neural command energy had other plans for me."

Suddenly, the Wormhole fluctuated and opened up and around the *Phoenix-X*, enveloping the ship.

"Ah, you know what," Kayl snapped her fingers in sudden recollection. "Like, fifteen other ships have gone through this exact same thing, just this month."

After a bright trans-dimensional flash that knocked the crew to the floor, the *Phoenix-X* found itself in a strange, new and fascinating type of space-- one more desperate to be more interesting than the last.

Seifer clutched his head as he tried to climb himself back to his chair. "Bloody hell. it's like the *Picard-Scimitar* crash all over again. I wasn't there for it, but I've heard rumours."

"Trying to get sensors online, now," Armond climbed back up to tactical and attempted to sort through a mess of holo-panels.

Ensign Dan found a holo-panel half-lodged into his head. "Armond, I think this one's yours." He pulled it out and looked at it. "Holy Sha Ka Ree! We're in a completely new, and likely recurring, type of space!"

"On screen," Seifer ordered.

As everyone got to their chairs, they beheld the most confusingly, possibly horrifying view blinking on the main viewer: A space filled with multi-shades of brown and white balls of fuzz, all around them; the vibration of which, through the bulkheads, created a calming effect.

"Is that what I think it is?" Seifer squinted his eyes in fear.

Armond's jaw was dropped, as with everyone else's, "Yes, sir... It's tribble. WE'RE IN TRIBBLE SPACE."

Meanwhile, two crew members in the non-windowed, lower-forgotten decks paused, momentarily, from their hard work.

"What was that ship jolt all about?" Tong asked.

Gewdeque shook her head. "How would I know? It's not like the Bridge is going to call us specifically and tell us what they're looking at."

"Yeah, that was a stupid question. Sorry."

Gewdeque sighed. "No, I'm sorry. It's fine. We'll just find out through the rumour mill over the course of several days passed the event, like we always do."

"Of course!" Tong smiled in relief. "Thanks, Gewdeque. You always did know how to manage command-structure-based ignorance."

Back on the Bridge, the crew worked frantically to figure out what was going on.

"How could we be in a situation? How and why and other steps I need to emotionally go through??" Seifer spat.

Kayl turned. "Sir, you're riling up everyone's anxieties, like some kind of riled-guy. In conclusion, it's annoying."

Armond flicked open one of his hovering panels. "The new scanning systems aggravated the Wormhole in a new and fantastic way, triggering an opening into a parallel dimension."

"Lens flares!?" Seifer looked around in panic and then stopped. "Sorry. That's just an unexplainable, innate fear I have. Seriously, I can not explain it."

Kugo pondered. "How can all of space be filled with tribble in this universe? What's in the spaces between the tribble?"

"That's normal space," Armond scanned. "But the tribble are so tightly compacted, that you can't see it with the naked eye. It appears there are enough of them to fill space itself. How far, would require a five-year mission, I assume."

Kayl turned again. "I don't get it? The tribble are a mammalian species from Iota Geminorum IV; a product of millions of years of evolution. How could they be here as well?"

"Obvious answer: Evolution isn't real, and neither is global warming," Ensign Dan turned, hoping to finally have a one-up on the crew.

Seifer pointed. "You're relieved!"

"I believe the more pressing question is, why tribble? Have we not had enough episodic spin-off situations dealing with them by now? Can't we come up with new ideas?" Kugo raised an eyebrow.

Seifer tapped his chin in confusion. "I... I don't follow." He then sat back and relaxed. "Anyway, I'm sure we all know what we have to do now." He paused, sure of it himself. "We have to repopulate this universe with humanoids and restart the Federation. And this time, no more Lock Boxes."

"Captain, I'm reading a larger tribble; one that would put Cyrano Jones to shame! It's rolling through the other tribbles on a direct course for us!" Armond exclaimed.

The Captain shook his head. "A weight joke? In the 25th century? I'm disappointed in you, Armond."

The giant tribble, the size of a starship, stopped before the *Phoenix-X*, in the compacted tribble space, where neither was actually visible to each other. An outline of it was brought up on screen.

"By the roly-polly jostle of K'mpec himself!" Seifer's mouth gaped open, unaware of his own hypocrisy, to which Armond emanated a disapproving glance.

The *Phoenix-X* suddenly shook in vibrations, prompting Kayl to work quickly. "Sir, it's communicating by cute purrs! Translating the adorable messages now!"

The computer provided a deep, angry voice through all the shaking: "*Puny humanoid vessel! I am Troblor, and you have discovered tribble space. Eons ago we sent a single heroic tribble, Trebbly, to your universe in an effort to transform it into one like our own. We have nearly bred ourselves to a galactic unit. Is Trebbly's descendants now and finally your supreme rulers?*"

Still, with mouth gaped open, Seifer remained for several moments in shock. It was obvious now that early tribble were biologically spacefaring. Should he tell Troblor that nearly all tribbles were wiped out by Klingons in the 23rd century? Or that people were now breeding tribbles as out-of-combat self heals? Surely, explaining everything would be the right thing to do?

"Yeah," Seifer finally sputtered out in continued shock-reverie. The *Phoenix-X* vibrated in translation. "Yeah, you got us," Seifer said, not actually processing what he was saying, but more trying to fill the talk-void to hide his initial reaction.

Troblor vibrated in ecstasy, and the computer voiced him again, "*Oh that is wonderful news! We hope you like them. As a thank you, we shall return you to your universe. Once again, we appreciate the report.*"

Another, other worldly-pitched vibration from the giant tribble caused the *Phoenix-X* to be enveloped in a white energy, transporting the whole ship back into the prime universe, back outside Deep Space 9, surrounded by the empty void and stars.

The crew looked at each other in shock.

"Wow..... That was quite revelatory. And as such, we must never speak of this trip into Fluidic space again," Seifer ordered.

Kugo corrected, "Tribble space."

"Right. You see, my mind is already trying to suppress it. You will all suppress your memories." He pointed around the Bridge. "Kugo, have the new scanning equipment dismantled and replace it with a bunch of tricorders tied together." He got up and walked for his ready room, but paused. "As for the rest of you: This is what happens when cultures try to work in unison for a greater cause. Sure, relations can improve, friends can be made, but at what cost? Horrifying science-y outcomes??"

He then went into his ready room and accessed the replicator.

Moments later he stepped out with a spray bottle and sprayed water at his flinch-prone crew. "No! Bad Starfleet, bad!"

Meanwhile, out on the hull of the *Phoenix-X*, a single, solitary spaceborne tribble detached itself and menacingly sped off into deep space.