

Star Beagle Adventures Episode 3: Yours Is No Disgrace

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Star Beagle Adventures Episode 3: Yours Is No Disgrace

by [LordRobertBruceScott](#)

Summary

The Beagle task force sets out to locate a haunted, abandoned cardassian space station...

SBA Episode 3, Scene 1: Canisters From The Sky

Chapter Summary

The last moments of the northeastern civilization of Bor...

Chapter Notes

Throughout this episode, snippets of lyrics are quoted. These are from the song, "Yours Is No Disgrace" by Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Steve Howe, Bill Bruford, and Tony Kaye. The song first appeared as track 1 on "The Yes Album", 1971, Atlantic Records.



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 3: [Yours Is No Disgrace](#)

Scene 1: [Canisters From The Sky](#)

3.1

Canisters From The Sky

Sssnk Skvrs was panting and sweating profusely. It was too warm. Warm, nothing - it was way too hot. The summers had gotten hotter and yet their culture had not adapted to it and people came out in the blazing hottest part of the day, dressed in business suits that provided layers of clothing - fashionable until you started to melt.

But the midday meal was to be taken outdoors. It had always been that way. Tradition mattered. And one of those traditions was destroying the habitat of the People and the Not-People alike. The Not-People blamed the People for the heat. Because the People built an extensive energy network and flew everywhere, using far more fossil energy than the ground vehicles the Not-People used.

The People blamed the Not-People because on their side of the Bor, they built an extensive network of roads for their ground transport. Roads that absorbed sunlight instead of radiating it back into space. Just because it was far more convenient to build roads out of dark materials.

If Star Fleet had encountered this world and these people, the unimaginative Star Fleet Xenanthropology Division would have given both the People and the Not-People the name Boreans - or something even less imaginative. They were, technically, one species of humanoids, not too dissimilar from Neanderthals in appearance - they could (with some headwear) pass for human.

Sssnk felt a smaller hand slide into his. He recognized the hand by feel, by touch, by behavior even before he caught the scent of his boyfriend, Brill. Brill's touch was comforting even though it was far too hot. If it weren't for the heat, it would be a gorgeous day. Small, personal aerofoils filled the sky, sailing gracefully across the cityscape, landing in grassy fields with a great flapping of plexiflex wings.

Large aerofoils hovered over buildings, bolstered by waste heat strategically vented out of the tops of the buildings to fill the foils and keep them aloft. There was no ground transportation, so there were no streets and few sidewalks - more skywalks. Strong turving created parks like the one that Sssnk and Brill were walking in, with resilient grasses that would protect the ground from most shoes and shoes from mud, whenever it rained.

Sssnk felt Brill's hand squeeze his suddenly. He turned to follow his boyfriend's gaze - up into the sky. A giant, ugly, dull gray canister was falling slowly, gracelessly from the sky. It flew low over the city, causing gasps of panic. Then it sailed some distance out and crashed

gradually, impossibly slowly, into the distant power plant near the river.

Some aerofoil pilots reacted quickly enough to bring their craft aloft - in some cases with heavy cargo or people falling to their deaths from the barking platforms. Other large transports fell gracelessly and heavily onto the buildings that could no longer produce sufficient air to support them.

As the city was slowly crumbling from this first strike, two additional canisters appeared in the skies, falling impossibly slowly into the city...



3.1

SBA Episode 3, Scene 2: The Legend of Dolnok Nor

Chapter Summary

Lost in summer, morning, winter, travel very far...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 3: Yours Is No Disgrace

Scene 2: The Legend of Dolnok Nor

Lost in summer, morning, winter, travel very far...

3.2

The Legend of Dolnok Nor

“So it looks like our intrepid businessman will be joining us for the foreseeable future.” Captain Skip Howard gestured toward Pel.

Captain Rhonda Carter (and her cousin, Major Janet Carter), the U.S.S. Beagle’s Dean, Sakura Nakamura Holland, and General Krank were in the Beagle’s large conference room, along with Commodore Yui Song. The U.S.S. Escort’s director of engineering, Lt. Ki Kresid, was also present.

“Pel is wrapped up in whatever is drawing us to Dolnok Nor - and thence to we know not where,” Skip Howard continued. “But wherever this adventure takes us, we won’t be back in Federation territory any time soon. So if Pel comes with us to assist with this investigation, and hopefully, achieve some peace from these astral projections, we will not be able to easily return him to the sanctuary we promised within the Federation.”

Commodore Yui looked to Sakura. “I think we will need a contract. Trader Pel has a right to conduct business, but while using our resources and traveling with representatives of the Federation, I think we will need to establish some guidelines and guard rails. Sakura, do you have any lawyers on staff?”

“Five of them, all members of the United Federation of Planets diplomatic corps,” the Dean of ship responded. “And the UFP has developed contracts with ferengi before - there are a lot of pitfalls that the diplomatic corps has encountered and developed workarounds for. They have a boilerplate to work from...”

“Next order of business,” said Yui Song. “Given the star chart that Captain Carter and the trace map that Lt. Kresid were able to provide, largely from memory, we have a rough idea where Dolnok Nor might be located. It is still a small needle in a haystack about 15 light years in diameter. I assume Beagle’s probes can map that area and hopefully find our abandoned cardassian space station?”

“Dutchie is programming the search protocols as we speak and the probes should be ready for launch within the hour,” Skip Howard reported. “I tried to locate the two survivors from the Dolnok Nor construction and also asked the new Cardassian Union government for any documentation, but it appears both were lost in the war. Even third- and fourth-hand accounts are hard to come by. The Cardassian Union is not thrilled about the Federation launching an expedition to Dolnok Nor, but they are not in any position to oppose it. Their only ask in the matter is that we return any artifacts retrieved from the station to the Cardassian government.”

“We will return their cultural treasures at our convenience,” Yui said coldly. A little too coldly, she realized, and made a mental note to have a long think about how much blame she placed on the cardassians for the war and the murder of her family. Later. Much later. She took a deep breath, then: “Skip, you seem to be a collector of strange stories... Tell us the strange story of Dolnok Nor - at least what you have gathered about it.”

Skip Howard smiled. “I do have a fondness for ghost stories and stories of a haunted space station, well, it’s kind of irresistible. My version

comes from a bajoran who had formed a friendship with her cardassian captor - which is a fascinating story in and of itself - who heard the story from the estranged wife of the commander of the division responsible for building the space stations.”

Howard paused for a drink of some clear, but fizzy beverage, then continued. “The cardassians would build each space station next to an existing space station. So Dolnok Nor was constructed next to Empok Nor, which was, in turn originally constructed next to Terok Nor. The cardassians would then tow each newly constructed space station to its designated location, then complete hookup in situ. Dolnok Nor didn’t make it to its designated location because of some subspace instability. None of the three towing barges made it back to normal space. There was some attempt to bring the station online, but it was abandoned due to something haunting the station - something that killed all of the workers and nearly all of the soldiers.”

“Apparently, several more cardassians and some of their bajoran slaves were murdered in a mad scramble to try to take the shuttles out of that space - none of those flights made it out either. The two cardassians who did survive managed to get off the station, onto one of the tugs, which was also haunted, and cannibalized it to build a small ship that got them out of the area and ultimately back to Empok Nor...”

SBA Episode 3, Scene 3: Dogfish

Chapter Summary

Dutch Holland thinks he has found Dolnok Nor.



The Star Beagle Adventures

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Scene 3: Dogfish

3.3

Dogfish

Only a day out of Deep Space 9 and the night terrors - or nightly journeys - had ceased for Trader Pel, Lt. Ki Kresid, and Captain Rhonda Carter. It had taken another three days at warp 5 to pass Empok Nor. The farther the task force traveled, the less definite the direction became.

“The first astral experience for our astral trio happened the very moment we were running an experiment with the doppler tunneling generator.” Commander Dutch Holland felt comfortable discussing this topic on the bridge of the U.S.S. Beagle exclusively in the presence of people who were authorized to know these details.

Captain Skip Howard was lounging in the captain’s chair - a posture that its previous occupant, some vulcan captain perhaps 20 years previously, would have found scandalous. The vulcan in the room today, Lt. Cmdr. Senek, stationed at the ops panel, appeared to find it only mildly annoying. Dean Sakura Nakamura Holland was at the pilot station. Dr. Tentis Uto was seated at the life sciences station.

“The next round of astral journeys did not happen until we arrived at Deep Space 9,” Commander Holland continued. “We had been running subspace soundings steadily. The subspace configuration in the environment of DS9 is impacted by the presence of the wormhole. The stresses that our experiment caused in local subspace were nearly identical to the stresses caused by the wormhole...”

“So are you telling me that you know how to find Dolnok Nor?” asked Captain Howard.

“We opened a door,” said the masked director of engineering. “Something on the other side reached through and brought our people to that space station. The wormhole opened a similar door. I have been reprogramming our probes to look for the other side of that door. And I think I found it. I would like to re-task one of our probes to enter that space and see if we can obtain readings.”

“What is the downside?” the Beagle’s captain asked.

“We could lose the probe,” Dutch Holland answered.

“With all of the advanced, sensitive technology that it carries,” Sakura Holland added. “Technology we really don’t want anyone else getting their hands on.”

“What if we were to rig up a probe that could sit outside of the, um, area of denatured space and send a smaller probe in? How long would that take to develop and deploy?” Howard asked.

“It would be at least 34 hours to put the probe in place.” Dutch Holland looked down and rubbed his gloved hands. Cracked enormous knuckles. “Probably, Sakura?” His wife looked back at him. “Probably 2-3 hours to rig it up?”

“Easily,” Sakura replied. “Maybe a little less. How about a little robot to board the station? Do some scouting?”

“A dogfish,” Commander Holland replied.

“Alright then,” Howard said. “I’ll clear it with the commodore. Get me a pilot up here and get down to the launch lab and start rigging that thing!”

SBA Episode 3, Scene 4: Tugged

Chapter Summary

The task force is tugged unexpectedly.



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Scene 4: Tugged

3.4

Tugged

Over the years of occupation, Star Fleet had developed a very comprehensive technical manual for the Deep Space 9 space station, originally named Terok Nor. This was due in no small part to the efforts and copious notes of Chief Petty Officer Miles O'Brien, which had been compiled largely by Rom, prior to his ascension to the post of Grand Nagus.

This manual had been uploaded to the U.S.S. Beagle and then to the probes that had been sent to seek out Dolnok Nor. The launch of the mini-probe into the suspected denatured space surrounding the station had gone smoothly and there were only residual readings of any subspace anomalies.

The dogfish was a small robot, approximately the size and shape of a chihuahua. Its computer was sophisticated enough to now contain the DS9 technical manual. The robot had set about first replicating a few hundred copies of itself using materials present in the incomplete space station. This small army of robots set about bringing the operations center and the promenade online and exploring the station, cataloguing the strange damage - melted holes, weakened and collapsed superstructure, and lots and lots of dead bodies that had been mummified in the absence of oxygen. Nearly a hundred cardassians. Hundreds of bajorans - who had evidently arrived and died as slaves.

The dogfish broke into three schools, remotely tasked from the Beagle. The engineering task group folded their legs and used magnetic repulsion to weave their way to the power core of the station. The ops task group remained in the operations center, crawling all over the various stations and trying to bring heavily damaged cardassian computer systems online. The casualty task group spread out throughout the station, locating and photographing the dead bajorans and cardassians for later identification.

The probe that had carried the father dogfish to the station had travelled at high warp and arrived 26 hours ahead of the Beagle Task Force. Given the large number of dead and the nearby inert ships, 3 cardassian tugs, a Galorn-class cruiser and 5 large shuttle craft, Commodore Yui Song ordered the task force to orbit the station at the distance of 50,000 kilometers, far outside of the detected area of subspace instability.

Because they were constructed from local materials, the dogfish were also flying, walking collections of the spare parts needed for repairs and most of them were disassembled by the others in order to integrate their components into the station's power plant and into the control units in the operation center. Where at one point there had been well over 200 dogfish, only about 16 remained. But some sections of the station now had power, including the operations center.

"I'd like to take the Beagle in there, grab one of those cardassian tugs and bring it out."

Captain Howard was seated on the throne-like captain's chair in the U.S.S. Beagle's triangular bridge, the first time Commodore Yui Song had seen him there. He had just updated her about the progress of the schools of dogfish on the station.

Commodore Yui was seated in the captain's chair on her own bridge - a far less ornate affair. She found it odd that the vulcan bridge had been designed to create such an intimidating, regal effect around its captain during communication. It seemed at odds with the impression most humans shared about vulcan esthetics. She smiled, suddenly realizing this was why Skip Howard so rarely initiated communication from his own bridge. He preferred to report in from his office.

"How long will your ship be in the danger zone?" Yui asked. "And is there any way our ships can help if something goes wrong that will not increase the risk for the entire task force?"

Skip Howard didn't hesitate. "There would be nothing you could do but come and get us, which would mean that you would be facing whatever we face. But that would be mitigated if a lifeline type maneuver could be employed. Dutch tells me we can go in there, capture the

tug with a tractor beam and pull it out of there in 30 minutes, which tells me we can probably do it in 20.”

“And why is it more advantageous to have your ship do this than the Mako?” Yui asked.

“Time and the probability of success,” Howard responded. “While the Mako is by far the more powerful ship, when it comes to towing, the Beagle has a far more powerful tractor system. It latches faster and is rated for much greater mass than Star Fleet standard. That primary tug is really massive and would be the most valuable for us to pull out of there. Especially if we can access its records. We can see where this station was supposed to be going and why, or at least how it got stopped here.”

Captain Rhonda Carter was monitoring this conversation from her own bridge. Once again, she had placed General Krank at the ops station on her bridge. She finally spoke up: “If we have to go lifeline, who is the anchor and who goes in?”

Commodore Yui responded without hesitation. “Mako has a much stronger tractor system with a much longer range. We go in. Escort holds the door for us.”

“That ma...” Carter got no further in her sentence as she slid, senseless out of her chair. General Krank responded more quickly than the rest of her bridge crew, coming out of his chair and catching her as she slid toward the deck. Carter’s new bolian first officer, Lt. Cmdr. Zizira Gross, stepped up from behind, cradling her captain’s head, protecting her from injury.

At that same moment, the medical alert sounded on both the U.S.S. Escort and the U.S.S. Mako. Reports from Escort’s and Mako’s crew sounded at the same time and were carried into the ship communication between all three ships:

“Commodore, this is Dr. Lucius Moonman, Trader Pel has collapsed in the galley. I am en route...”

“Bridge, this is Chief Roman Hess, we have a medical emergency in engineering... Lieutenant Kresid has collapsed and lost consciousness...”

Commodore Yui turned to her communications officer at ops: “Clear internal traffic and reroute and cancel the alert.” She returned her attention to the split view of the two other bridges on her main viewscreen:

“Captain Howard, I think this situation impacts your mission to retrieve the tug...”

“It does, Song,” Howard responded, leaning forward in his chair. “The retrieval mission just became critical and urgent... I would like to go right now, sir.”

SBA Episode 3, Scene 5: Go!

Chapter Summary

It's GO time...



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Scene 5: Go!

3.5

Go!

“Go!”

Commodore Yui was not the type to make snap decisions. Not the sort to trust her instincts. But on very few, rare occasions, she had trusted her gut when there really wasn't time for thought. In this moment, she wasn't trusting her instincts. She was trusting Skip Howard's.

“Take us in, full impulse!” Howard said, then his visage vanished from the U.S.S. Mako's viewscreen. The U.S.S. Escort's bridge still took up half of the screen as the other half switched to an external view.

“Commodore!” It was General Krank on Escort's bridge. “You must put our astral dreamers into stasis!”

“Dr. Moorman,” Yui said, “Place Trader Pel in stasis and have Captain Carter and Lieutenant Kresid beamed into stasis.”

“Sir?” came Moorman's voice over the comm system.

“Now, Doctor.” Yui said.

“General?” said the Escort's new bolian 1st officer. She gestured toward the captain's chair as the unconscious Captain Rhonda Carter was beamed out of it.

“That is your chair, Lieutenant Commander. I am your ally, not your commanding officer,” Krank said.

This scene played out in front of Commodore Yui and her bridge crew. “Lieutenant Commander Gross,” Yui said, “the probability that we will need to rescue the Beagle from the instability area has just gone up. We're going to play lifeline. The Escort will advance to the edge of the area of instability - 3.5 kilometers from the station - and engage in station keeping relative to the Dolnok Nor station. I will take the Mako in as far as necessary to provide support to the U.S.S. Beagle. You will be our beacon and will be prepared to assist with a tractor beam if needed to assist either or both ships to exit the area of instability.”

“Understood, Commodore,” Gross responded.

Both the U.S.S. Escort and the U.S.S. Mako were considerably faster than the vulcan-constructed U.S.S. Beagle and despite his head start, by the time Skip Howard's ship arrived at the boundary, both of the other ships were there waiting for him. The Beagle proceeded in toward the space station while both the Mako and the Escort maintained station keeping at 3.5 kilometers from the station.

“We just received several large files from the dogfish,” Lt. Cmdr. Senek reported.

“Approaching at full impulse, E.T.A. 2 minutes,” reported 2nd Lt. Piper Akrele.

Captain Howard turned his chair to face the pilot's station and its wall-sized monitor. The Beagle's bridge was laid out in an equilateral triangle, with the throne-like chair in the center that could turn to face any of the 3 walls. Each wall had 2 available stations that could be assigned to any function - helm, navigation, ops, life science, engineering or any other function. Oddly, none of these walls faced forward, so when the ship was traveling forward, the captain's chair was typically oriented toward the starboard bow.

“Are you planning to impact the tug, Captain?” Senek asked.

“Reverse engines now!” Howard ordered. “Sakura, stand by to engage the tractor the moment we reach all stop.”

“Programming it now.” Sakura Nakamura Holland responded from the operations panel, currently located at the port bow oriented wall. Lt. Cmdr. Senek’s station at the rear-facing wall was currently set up for sensors and engineering monitoring.

Any standard build Star Fleet vessel would be able to answer all-stop from full impulse within a few seconds. The antique, vulcan-built Beagle required a full minute at full reverse to answer all-stop and begin moving away.

“Responding to all stop, but the tractor beam is not latching,” Sakura reported. “Repeat, tractor not latching.”

Skip Howard hit the comm switch on the arm of his chair. “Dutchie!! Get me that ship...”

“Partial latch,” Sakura reported. “Recommend you slow to 1/4 reverse impulse, Captain. Any faster and we’re going to lose our grip.”

“Akerеле, throttle down to 1/4 reverse,” Howard ordered.

“Responding to 1/4 reverse,” 2nd Lt. Piper Akerеле replied.

“We’ve got increasing subspace interference,” came Commander Dutch Holland’s voice over the comm system. “I reconfigured the tractor. I think you can throttle up to 3/4 reverse impulse, Skip, but not any faster. We need to make sure no one opens a warp field, or it will play havoc with local spacetime. It’s under a lot of stress as is.”

“Bring us up to 3/4 impulse, nice and slow, Piper,” Howard ordered. “With this ship you should be able to feel the pull from the tractor. If you feel it start to slip a little, ease up on the acceleration. You wouldn’t get that kind of feedback in a standard Star Fleet ship.”

“Bringing it up to three quarters reverse impulse, sir,” Piper Akerеле responded.

“Live feed from the dogfish,” said Sakura Nakamura Holland.

Captain Howard turned the captain’s chair to face the ops station and its wall-sized monitor. Sprites were racing through ops, frying out the remaining robots and undoing their repairs. Bolts of lightning from the brightly colored, amorphous blobs of light destroyed circuits, smashed smoking holes in entire panels. The master dogfish - the original robot - was moving quickly in response to Sakura’s remote commands, but it could not evade the sprites for long. Sakura screamed in agony as bolts of lightning blanked out the feed from the chihuahua-sized robot and came straight through the ops panel, destroying part of it and burning her hands.

“Medical emergency! Med team to the bridge!” Howard ordered as he came out of his chair and retrieved an emergency medkit from a compartment below the left arm rest.

“We just lost the tractor beam!” came Dutch Holland’s voice over the comm system.

“Akerеле, full impulse, get us out of here!” Howard ordered as he unlimbered a device from the medkit and began spraying a foam onto Sakura’s burnt hands. “Senek, re-route ops to your panel and get us full shields.” Then more quietly: “Keep your hands loose, fingers slightly spread but don’t stretch them,” he said to Sakura. She was whimpering and crying in pain and fear, but no longer screaming in agony. “Steady now,” Howard said as he used a vulcan fabric knife to easily slice her sleeves open, revealing more burns that needed treatment. He sprayed more foam onto her arms.

As the U.S.S. Beagle backed away from the Dolnok Nor station, the station’s shield emitters began sparking with massive bolts of electricity. These reached out and destroyed part of the cardassian tug that was still moving away from the station. The tug’s nacelles had already been destroyed, apparently by a similar effect.

A second bolt reached out, but the tug was still moving away and had apparently moved out of effective range. The bolt struck the tug several times, but did little further damage.

One of the doctors arrived on the bridge of the Beagle and examined Sakura’s burned hands. “I need to get her down to medical for emergency treatment...”

Howard responded with a single word:

“Go!”

SBA Episode 3, Scene 6: Tomato

Chapter Summary

You say tomato...



The Star Beagle Adventures

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Scene 6: Tomato

3.6

Tomato

“Go ahead, bitch! Slap me down again! You know I’ll just get back... *hic* ...up ag...” Captain Rhonda Carter wasn’t able to continue her red-faced yelling as other out-flowing traffic was taking priority.

General Krank got the bucket to her quickly enough. This time.

“Ten, please tell me what you gave them again?” asked a frustrated and weary Captain Skip Howard.

Lt. Ki Kresid was hanging upside down with her legs hooked over the back of one of the biobeds in the U.S.S. Mako’s medical center, her long, thin, prehensile tongue regularly flicking out and down into a small glass of purplish fluid. The tiny roylan’s skin had gone from its usual greenish gray to a bright, glowing, fluorescent green. A dark, greenish smoke cloud puffed out of her crenelated cheeks in slight pulses.

Pel was sitting cross-legged on the same biobed, his fingers crammed in his ears, face screwed up in a grimace and was occasionally emitting a high-pitched hooting that sounded something like a cross between a small owl and a bat. He occasionally removed his knuckles from his ears long enough to shake his head vigorously, then his fingers slammed back into his ears. And there was more high-pitched hooting.

“I have provided each of them a unique cocktail of neural depressants, pain receptor blockers and a course of purgatives,” the betazoid doctor responded.

“It looks like you got them all trash-faced drunk,” Commodore Yui Song observed.

Dr. Tentis Uto shrugged. “Eh... You say tomato, I say *tomahto*...”

The bald doctor took a breath. “Even in stasis, their brains were entering a dangerous fugue state and their bodies were starting to overload with toxins. There’s no way to speed this process up. They’re just going to have to suffer through this. Whatever it was that got into them would have killed them in seconds if the General hadn’t advised you to have them placed in stasis. Even so, it was a very close call.”

Rhonda Carter’s digestive system was taking a break, giving General Krank the opportunity to empty the contents of the bucket.

“How did you know, Krank?” Skip Howard asked.

Krank was emerging from the water closet. He had brought out a wet rag and proceeded to use it to gently clean Captain Carter’s face as she alternately drooled and made feeble attempts to wave his attentions away:

“The last time something supernatural got into people in this area of space, they died,” the elderly klingon general observed.

Skip Howard gave Yui Song a significant look. “Well, he’s more than just a pretty face.” The captain of the U.S.S. Beagle took a deep breath.

"That cardassian tug is still moving this way, although it seems to have been slowed due to some property of the space it is traveling through. Dutch tells me it should exit denatured space within the hour. Hopefully we'll be able to get some useful information from its logs and an investigation of its engineering section... What's left of its engineering section."

"How is Sakura?" Commodore Yui asked.

"Ten got to her in time," Howard responded.

"We have regrown the dermal layers on her hands," Dr. Tentis Uto said. "It will take a few weeks of exercise and continued surgery to restore them to full function and sensitivity. Some of her fingers were burned down to the bone. But as Skip said, we got to her in time to prevent neural pathway decay. As with most things in medicine, response time is critical."

"Next order of business." Commodore Yui Song immediately had everyone's full attention. "Dr. Uto, what was the frequency of the astral experiences while we were aboard Deep Space 9?"

"27 hours, 13 minutes, 26 seconds," Uto replied.

"Skip, where were we a little over 28 hours ago?"

Captain Skip Howard nodded. "We had slowed our approach. We would have been about 7 light years from here. I can have the exact coordinates forwarded."

"Do that," Yui said. "Those coordinates will become our next rally point. How fast can the U.S.S. Beagle tow that cardassian tug through normal space?"

"Warp 7.5," Howard responded.

"That beats this ship and is more than twice what the Escort could accomplish," Yui said. She turned to the bald, betazoid doctor. "Dr. Uto, can Sakura be moved to and treated in this medical facility? And can these three continue their recuperation here?"

"Easily," Uto said. "Give me 20 minutes to compare notes with Lucius. I know where you're going with this and I think my most advantageous deployment would be back to the Beagle."

"Excellent," said Commodore Yui. "General Krank, I think Lt. Commander Gross could use your support aboard the Escort."

The elderly klingon general had been holding the bucket that had three times now served to catch the contents of Captain Rhonda Carter's digestive system. With a single motion that was at once commanding and eloquent, and without breaking eye contact with Commodore Yui, he extended his arm, placing the bucket in front of a passing orderly, who took the grim receptacle with mingled surprise and disgust.

"Skip, I'm going to take this ship to the rally point," Yui said. "I want the Beagle and the Escort to wait here for that tug to enter normal space. As soon as possible, with all due care and deliberate speed, I want you to tow that cardassian ship to the rally point with Escort to watch your six. Dismissed."

Chapter Summary

Captain Howard doesn't get a shiner



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Scene 7: Shiner

3.7

Shiner

Despite the long list of scientists eager to study the cardassian tug, out of an abundance of caution, Captain Skip Howard would not authorize travel to the cardassian ship or anything beyond passive scanning and review of the feedback from the tractor beam while the tug was in tow.

He brought the U.S.S. Beagle - and the cardassian tug it was towing - to station keeping four light years away from the U.S.S. Mako. Howard reached out to the U.S.S. Escort from the Beagle's bridge:

"Lieutenant Commander Gross, please remain in contact with the Mako," Howard said. "I will join the boarding party for our salvaged cardassian ship. I will need to know immediately if anything we do over there causes any change for your captain. I will keep my communicator line open..."

"Captain Howard," Lt. Cmdr. Gross replied, "Please stand by for communication from Commodore Yui Song. She's requesting you take her call in your office."

"Understood. Beagle out," Howard said. He exchanged glances with his beautiful, but perpetually mournful vulcan 2nd officer, Lt. Cmdr. Senek. On the Beagle, the captain's office was located immediately forward of the bridge. Howard walked toward the corner where the forward starboard and port monitor/walls met. The two walls seemed to slide back to create a doorway into the captain's office, then closed behind him.

Howard touched a control on his desk to find Commodore Yui Song, evidently in her captain's lounge aboard the U.S.S. Mako, waiting for him.

"Song..."

"Skip, don't make me order you to remain on your bridge. You are a biologist, not an astro-physicist," Yui said.

"The issue could very well be caused by a biological substance..." Howard started.

"You have biologists on staff, some of the best the Federation has to offer. Better than you, and you know it," Yui Song replied with exasperation. "Believe me, I understand the desire to go on away missions. Set the example for me, Skip, let me talk you out of it instead of giving you an order."

It was the first time Yui Song had ever seen Skip Howard lose his composure. The young captain raised his hands slightly and dropped them to his sides a few times and paced around for a moment, looking considerably frustrated. Green eyeshadow. Black fingernail polish. Commodore Yui had learned enough about Captain Howard to recognize the colors he used to signal authority and aggression.

Skip Howard closed his eyes, made an amused noise, then smiled. "Okay, Song. I'm smart enough to know that you're right. I know when I'm beat."

"Attaboy, Skip," Commodore Yui replied. "Get back in there and smooth it over. Bump in the road."

"More like a shiner," Captain Howard replied.

"Oh no, Skip," Commodore Yui rejoined. "It would be a shiner if I had to give you an order. This is just a friendly tap on the shoulder."

That brought a genuine smile to Skip Howard's face.

“Now you’re ready to go back in there,” Yui said.

SBA Episode 3, Scene 8: You Are Here

Chapter Summary

You are here...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 3: [Yours Is No Disgrace](#)

Scene 8: [You Are Here](#)

3.8

You Are Here

“Okay, you have to see this... I didn’t want to run a scan of this depth until we were well clear of the area of denatured space. Our probe is digging pretty deep into subspace to gather this information...”

The large, musclebound luchador in charge of the U.S.S. Beagle’s engine room had his wife and all three captains, as well as the U.S.S. Escort’s director of engineering, Lt. Ki Kresid, along with General Krank, Trader Pel, and a few others, in the Beagle’s mind-bending engine room. While Skip Howard, Dutch Holland and Sakura Nakamura Holland were used to this space, Rhonda Carter and especially Pel both found themselves flinching and ducking whenever someone on another platform walked past, anchored by gravity on a floor that was at a 60 degree angle - or even more when an engineer passed just above them - upside down relative to the people below them.

Dutch Holland brought up a readout on the primary engineering monitor, which was even larger than the wall-sized monitors on the Beagle’s bridge.

“That looks like Dolnok Nor,” said Sakura Nakamura Holland. She was very gently massaging and exercising her hands.

It wasn’t immediately obvious to everyone else, but gradually, they began to register that the readout was showing technical details that represented the mass and electrical readouts of the station, the 5 large shuttles, 2 remaining cardassian tugs, the Galorn class cruiser... and one more ship...

“A D7 Klingon Battle Cruiser?” asked Sakura Nakamura Holland.

“Not with that power reading,” Captain Skip Howard rejoined. “Krank? Is that a...”

“An abomination,” the elderly klingon general said.

He looked around and noticed that everyone was looking at him expectantly. General Krank indulged in a heavy sigh. “Nearly 200 years ago, when my government was upgrading our fleet, we provided a number of antiquated D7 cruisers to the Romulan Star Empire in return for their research into improved cloaking devices. These were the first ships the romulans used to experiment with a new power system...”

“Micro-singularities,” said Skip Howard. “The first generation of them did not work well. The romulans stuck with this design until they perfected it. Material analysis indicates this ship was of romulan construction - it was probably operative about 70-90 years ago. About the time the cardassians were expanding into this region of space. So this ship, most likely now full of dead romulans, was probably shadowing the cardassian operation to move the space station into place. Something went wrong...”

“The romulans had all kinds of problems trying to manage their use of micro-singularities until only about 40 years ago,” Sakura observed. She turned toward her husband. “How did you know it was there?”

It was odd to see Dutch Holland smile - it was a luchador mask smiling. “The chances of the space station being accidentally dragged through an area of subspace instability are hopelessly improbable. Something they brought with them had to cause it. I had been thinking about that for a while, but the idea of it being a romulan experiment with micro-singularity power plants didn’t hit me until I examined the compression

fractures in what's left of that cardassian tug's nacelles. And it tracks with the records we were able to access. There was a flash - like a cloaking device at close range not failing, but briefly allowing the cloaked vessel to be seen due to a rough cycling..."

"It's been nearly 80 years," said Commodore Yui Song. "How is it that that romulan ship is still cloaked?"

Skip Howard, Sakura Nakamura Holland and Dutch Holland turned toward the commodore and replied in unison:

"Micro-singularity."

"Unless someone deliberately shuts that cloaking device down, that ship could remain cloaked for thousands of years," Sakura added.

"And we don't want to do that," said Dutch Holland. "Trader Pel knows why..."

Everyone turned to look at the minuscule ferengi exile.

Pel exchanged glances with his fellow astral travelers, then took a deep breath. "Our experiences... those destructive light thingies... the ghosts on that cardassian space station... the battleships... the wolfhounds... they're from somewhere else. Ki and Rhonda and I were talking about it. This last experience, when we were knocked out, the ghosts fed us math..."

"The formulas were way too much for me and Ki," said Rhonda Carter. "But Pel was able to remember them..."

"The math isn't that difficult," Pel rejoined. "It's very similar to a market manipulation scheme designed to short sell future values..." He stopped as he could see the eyes of his audience glazing over. "Well, anyway, the math for that scheme was inspired by a subspace movement tracking algorithm. Or it inspired the algorithm - I'm not really sure which came first..."

Dutch Holland picked it up: "As you know subspace and relative spacetime are both constantly in motion in ways that are very loosely related. Areas of weakened subspace create fracture patterns that cause subspace to realign..."

"Enough with the Sherlock Holmes reveal, Dutchie," said an exasperated Skip Howard. "Get to the point..."

Trader Pel spoke up first: "The point is that all those ghosts who have been dragging us out of bed and across a hundred lightyears to Dolnok Nor don't actually live there. They're from somewhere else. And they're telling us how to find them."

Commander Dutch Holland touched a control with a gloved finger. The main engineering monitor changed to display a vast star chart in four dimensions. With two points highlighted. Holland pointed. "We are here. They..." Holland moved his gloved finger to point at the other highlight - a star system approximately 400 light years distant and located in a remote sector, well above the mean distribution for the galactic disk: "Are there..."

Chapter End Notes

In the original Star Trek series (TOS), the 2nd episode of the 3rd season, "The Enterprise Incident", featured the romulans using a klingon D7 cruiser. To my knowledge, there are no definitive answers as to why this happened.

The most common explanation regarding why the writers did it was that the original model for a Romulan Warbird was either missing or not available and they didn't have the budget to replace it. A more subtle explanation was that the Romulan Warbird, when introduced, was not supposed to be able to travel at warp and this was why the writers did not want to use the original model.

Fan theories as to why the klingons would sell their cruisers to the romulans largely center around the idea of it being an exchange for superior romulan cloaking technology.

rbs

SBA Episode 3, Scene 9: Shatter

Chapter Summary

Coming to a subspace fracture near you soon...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 3: Yours Is No Disgrace

Scene 9: Shatter

3.9

Shatter

“We had our probes go to station keeping, passive scanning, stealth protocol.”

The U.S.S. Beagle’s Dean of Ship, Sakura Nakamura Holland, was addressing the three captains, General Krank, Trader Pel and several others from the U.S.S. Beagle’s large conference room. All of the Beagle’s department heads were present. Commodore Yui Song and Captain Rhonda Carter were attending virtually from the bridges of their respective ships, the U.S.S. Mako and the U.S.S. Escort.

All parties were staggered by the images being transmitted by the two probes. A vast ship-building project was underway inside a binary star system.

Warships.

Lots of them.

“Analysis of their engine systems indicates these are based on a slip-drive technology,” said the masked Commander Dutch Holland. “Those engines are designed to shatter normal spacetime and create a vent into subspace. Inefficient, unhealthy and very damaging to local spacetime. If that armada were to exit that star system - even if only a quarter of them were to exit - it would change the orbits of all the planets in the system, even alter the orbit of the red dwarf orbiting the main sequence star at the far edge of the system.”

“Evidently these people do not have any intention of coming back home,” said Falok, the Astrophysics team leader from the Vulcan Science Academy. “Subspace disruption on that scale would mean they will not have a habitable planet left to come home to.”

“There are no people on those ships,” said General Krank.

“That is correct,” said Dutch Holland. “But how did you know?”

All eyes in the room turned to the elderly klingon general.

Krank touched the holographic control on the console in front of him. In response, all of the display systems focused in on a green, gold and blue planet. “The 8th planet from the primary star. That is the habitable planet. The original home of these machines. War machines. War machines created by at least one culture on that world to put a final end to at least one other culture on that world. My people barely survived this more than a thousand years ago. The machines have a hard time distinguishing their creators' enemies from their creators. If there are any people left alive down there, the machines will complete their extermination when they leave this system.”

“Leave it to do what?” Commodore Yui Song could already predict the general’s answer.

“To follow their directive” opined the ancient klingon. “To kill all the enemies of their creators. All life. Everywhere. As efficiently as they possibly can.”

“How can you be certain?” asked Captain Skip Howard.

“I can’t be,” General Krank admitted. “But we have all heard Captain Carter, Lieutenant Kresid and Trader Pel’s accounts of their experiences. Your probes have detected the ruins of what appears to be a technologically advanced humanoid civilization that covered most of the surface of the 8th planet. You see the armada of machines gathered. What other explanations do you have?”

“Skip,” said Sakura Nakamura Holland, “We have readings that indicate some of those people might still be alive down on that planet. If even only a few of those ships leave that system, they probably will not survive.”

“The prime directive applies,” answered Commodore Yui Song. “They are not a superluminal species.”

“They may not be,” mused Skip Howard. “But their machines are. Commodore, this,” Howard gestured toward the display with both hands. “This is why we are out here. This is a first contact situation with an intelligence that is on the verge of superluminal travel.”

Captain Rhonda Carter was shaking her head. “I’ve got a really bad feeling about this... I’ve had these creatures in my head - or something like that. If we walk up and say hello, they’re going to start shooting. They’re made to kill. It’s in their souls.”

Dr. Lucius Moorman, who was seated next to Commodore Yui on the Mako’s bridge, shook his head. “Machines have souls?”

“These machines do,” General Krank answered.

Trader Pel followed his thought. “They don’t want to kill. They were made to kill. It’s in their nature - built into everything they are.”

“Do we really need to worry about them?” asked Commander Jason Bates, Mako's first officer, who was also present on the bridge of the U.S.S. Mako. “Slip drive through subspace is superluminal, but it is a very limited way to travel. They can only move between areas of subspace instability, and the travel through subspace would be very slow - not much faster than the speed of light.”

“And the first place those machines would go would be the nearest fracture in subspace,” said the Beagle’s masked director of engineering.

“Which would be Dolnok Nor,” his wife continued. “Where they will learn all about warp drive, photonic weapons, cloaking devices, micro-singularity drive...”

Dutch Holland followed up his wife’s thought: “Even if we were to destroy all the technology the cardassians and romulans left behind at Dolnok Nor, sooner or later those machines would just discover another trove of FTL technology. No matter what mechanism you use to get around the speed of light, FTL is inherently unstable. Intelligent superluminal travel is by far the leading cause of subspace instability.”

There was a minute of silence as the import of Commander Holland’s conclusion sank in.

Captain Skip Howard took a deep breath. Then:

“If General Krank and our astral dreamers are correct, and these machines truly are inimical to life, we have to stop them here.”

SBA Episode 3, Scene 10: Checkmate

Chapter Summary

Checkmate in 3 moves...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 3: [Yours Is No Disgrace](#)

Scene 10: [Checkmate](#)

3.10 [Checkmate](#)

Captain Skip Howard, Commander Dutch Holland and Sakura Nakamura Holland, the U.S.S. Beagle's Dean of Ship, had been summoned to the Beagle's main conference room the day after the discovery of the battle fleet being assembled within the Al Seribo binary star system. As they rode a lift through the engineering floors and walked into the hallway leading to the conference room, they were having a hushed but quite animated conversation.

"So yesterday you thought they could launch this armada within the hour. Then it was in a day, maybe a week," Skip Howard said, gesturing dramatically with his hand. "Now you're telling me they could have gone 30 years ago and you have no idea when they might launch their anti-biological pogrom?"

"Our readings are clear." The musclebound engineering luchador was clearly both annoyed and mystified. "Those engines can shatter their way into subspace. They've solved all the problems. There are no technological reasons they couldn't have launched years ago. We have readings that indicate these engines are at least 30 years old. We thought they were in the final stages of assembling their ships." He shrugged and looked at his wife.

Sakura picked up the explanation. "The moment they get one of those engines completely assembled..."

At this moment, the door into the conference room opened at a command by the person who had summoned them there: General Krank.

A large, virtual Tri-D chess set was displayed in the center of the conference table. Several pieces had been captured and a game was evidently on in earnest.

Dr. Arthur Rush, the UFP sociologist and first contact specialist, was holding his own against General Krank.

Commodore Yui Song was also present, watching the game with interest. Captain Howard and the Hollands took places around the conference table.

"I take it the Al Seribo armada is not launching today or in the next few days?" the general asked. "King's bishop to white level 4B." It was an aggressive move.

"Their ships could have gone 30 years ago," said Sakura Nakamura Holland. "But the moment any engine is completely assembled, they begin stripping it all the way down to the rivets - all the way down to its component parts and then they start building it again."

"Pawn from white level 2C to 3C," said Dr. Rush. The white pawn now threatened the klingon general's bishop.

"Perfect timing," General Krank observed. "And they've been assembling and disassembling that fleet for at least 30 years? King's bishop will take the proffered pawn and that makes check."

"The wear patterns on some of the assembly equipment indicates it is at least 30 years old, but there are freshly built tools, so for all we know, this strange behavior could have been going on much, much longer," Commander Holland observed.

"Rotate King's attack board 90 degrees," said Dr. Rush.

“Hold game and detail the last move,” said General Krank.

“And there it is...” the klingon general gestured to the chessboard as the moveable attack board rotated, moving the king out of check and simultaneously protecting the piece from any diagonal attack. “The Zakdorn Twist. One of the new rules initiated by the Zakdorn to make it much more difficult for a computer to reliably win the game. And at the same time, the machine armada has exposed their weakness.”

“I can tell you have a point in all of this, Krank,” Skip Howard observed.

“There are some parts of federation history that klingons are often more familiar with than humans,” Krank rejoined. “Because klingons hate to lose and because we admire success. One human successfully managed first contact with a machine intelligence, not once, but three separate times. And each time he used an unexpected move to take advantage of an exposed weakness. The same man who was the only human to ever win the Vulcan Science Academy’s annual Tri-D Chess tournament... A contest won more often by machines than by vulcans...”

Arthur Rush's eyes lit up. “Captain James T. Kirk!”

“His career is required study for any klingon who wishes to become a general,” said Krank.

“Because klingons admire success,” said Captain Howard.

“And we hate to lose,” Krank continued. “It seems the machine armada has conflicting priorities. Probably programmed into their most primary level of code. If you want to prevent this armada from launching on their voyage of destruction, you must successfully manage first contact. And to do that, you must understand the exact cause of these conflicting priorities. Get it wrong, and you may resolve this internal conflict in such a way that it no longer hinders the armada from launching.”

“And the key to doing that is to understand how Captain Kirk did the same thing,” mused Dr. Rush. “Not once, but three times.” He returned his attention to the chess board. “Release the game and return to comprehensive view.” Rush turned his attention to the klingon general. “Checkmate in three moves.”

“WHAT???” Krank roared and focused intently on the board. The look of rage grew on his face. “DID I NOT JUST TELL YOU WE HATE TO LOSE?”

The middle-aged diplomat was neither large, nor athletic in any way. Pudgy, somewhat short and clearly terrified of the enraged klingon across the table from him, he appeared to be cataloguing the potential exits from the room.

Krank burst into laughter and slapped the table. “Well done, Doctor Rush!”

Skip Howard, who had taken a seat near the diplomat and across from the elderly klingon, leaned over and squeezed Dr. Rush's shoulder. Turquoise fingernail polish. “Klingons also admire success.” The Beagle’s captain stood and slapped the conference table. “Well, it seems some study of relevant logs of one Captain James T. Kirk would be in order...”

Chapter End Notes

In the original series, it was revealed in a few episodes that Captain Kirk was the only person on the ship who could (and reliably did) beat Commander Spock at Tri-D Chess.

SBA Episode 3, Scene 11: The Zakdorn Twist

Chapter Summary

Cultural use of radio...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 3: [Yours Is No Disgrace](#)

Scene 11: [The Zakdorn Twist](#)

3.11

The Zakdorn Twist

“I mean, I’m a fair player, but I’m totally mystified how I beat him. General Krank is a tri-D master...”

Dr. Arthur Rush was feeling the stress of having taken on solving the riddle of first contact. He was not the ranking member of the United Federation of Planets Diplomatic Corps representation embedded within the U.S.S. Beagle. Not even a team leader. But he was the specialist on first contact protocol, which meant he was now the project director tasked with recommending first contact protocol for the machine intelligence and armada in the AI Seribo star system.

“Krankie wasn’t playing that game to win,” Captain Skip Howard observed. He had joined Dr. Rush in the probe lab, along with Falok, the astrophysics team leader from the Vulcan Science Academy, and Sgt. Tommy Richards, the signals expert for the ship’s contingent from the United States Marine Corps.

Dr. Rush looked puzzled. Captain Howard smiled. “Krank’s objective was to set you up so that you would need to use the Zakdorn Twist just at the moment he wanted you to, so he could use that to illustrate his point. He achieved his objective. I think he was impressed you were capable of taking advantage of that situation to win the game.”

“Well, you thoroughly burst my bubble, sir,” said Rush, shaking his head with a smile.

Howard still felt it was odd that a man 20 years his elder - an accomplished diplomat with a Ph.D. from Adler University in Vancouver - would call him “sir,” but Dr. Rush seemed completely comfortable with it.

The Beagle’s probe lab consisted of two adjoining compartments near the fore of the ship. The forward compartment contained the probes, situated so they could be worked on and observed. Machinery in this room was designed to select and load the probes from this room into the launch tube.

Howard, Rush, Falok, and Sgt. Richards were located in the control lab, which included large monitors that displayed and filtered the incoming telemetry from the probes, and workstations designed to control each probe’s most minute functions.

“So what is this brilliant idea of yours, Art?” Howard asked.

“Well, as the general told us, we have to learn the base code of that machine armada. Why they keep disassembling their engines the moment they’re complete - then rebuild them without any changes. But there’s no way to do that without alerting them of our presence... What is our time table anyway?”

Sgt. Tommy Richards spoke up. “Our probes are using subspace soundings to obtain current readings. They are stationed approximately 4.8 light years from the AI Seribo star system. We have not detected any evidence that the AI Seribo armada can obtain readings from subspace without shattering the subspace barrier, which they seem very unwilling to do. Assuming their radio telemetry is sensitive enough to pick up our probes and that they happen to be looking in precisely the right direction, they will detect the presence of our probes approximately 4.8 years from now.”

“Once the probes were in position, we shut down their warp engines,” said Falok. “Even the presence of a warp field could give those machines the idea to set aside their subspace shattering efforts and develop warp drive.”

Sakura Nakamura Holland, wrapped in her favorite white kimono with cherry blossoms, had entered the probe lab while Falok had been talking. Skip Howard looked around and smiled. He was the only person in the room wearing a Star Fleet uniform. Dr. Rush had a dark blue, pinstriped suit with a light green pullover underneath. Falok wore the robes typical for a Vulcan Science Academy proctor.

Sgt. Richards was wearing the standard space combat uniform, which featured a subtle fractal camouflage pattern designed to be effective across several environments. His uniform hat was stored in a hutch under his chair. U.S. Marine protocol required marines to wear their hats in the ship corridors and in any room or at any work station that did not have adequate, safe storage for their hat. When Captain Howard had learned that, within 18 hours every workstation and most work spaces (with the exceptions of medical and engineering) had hat hutches installed. This attention to detail and protocol was not lost on the marines.

“Since we can’t directly access the base code,” Dr. Rush continued, “we need to analyze the culture that developed those machines. These machines are the expression of someone’s greatest cultural value. The general says they were made to exterminate the species that created them, but that is an unlikely core value. Someone was trying to use these machines to bring about their version of utopia.”

“Fine job they did of it,” Sakura Holland remarked.

“Actually, a typical job,” Dr. Rush countered. “Utopia is one of the most dangerous ideas that is common across several cultures. Until they leave the dreams and demons of utopic vision behind, every culture harbors the seeds of its own destruction... Seeds that germinated and bore fruit at Al Seribo. So how do we learn about the culture that produced those machines?”

Captain Howard turned to the marine at the probe control panel: “Sergeant Richards, did our probes pass through a radio bubble of cultural output from the Al Seribo star system?”

“No sir,” Richards replied. “This ship is inside the interior edge of that bubble. The probe was launched from the interior of the radio bubble.”

Howard turned toward the Dean of the Ship. “Sakura, did the Beagle collect the radio output of the Al Seribo culture as we traveled through that bubble? Is that signal history available for analysis?”

SBA Episode 3, Scene 12: Equilibrium

Chapter Summary

The machine code maintains a delicate equilibrium...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 3: [Yours Is No Disgrace](#)

Scene 12: [Equilibrium](#)

3.12 Equilibrium

“So if you’re right, we could sit here for 4 years trying to solve this riddle and that subspace shattering death armada would never know we’re here?” asked Captain Rhonda Carter. “It will just sit out there and keep taking itself apart and putting itself back together?”

“4.8 years,” Dr. Rush corrected.

“It can’t be that convenient,” Commodore Yui Song observed.

The three captains, most of the U.S.S. Beagle’s leadership, General Krank and several others were gathered once again in the Beagle’s large conference room. The Beagle’s complement consisted of dozens of civilian scientists from several different institutions within the United Federation of Planets. Of all of these august scientists, probably the most impressive (and disturbing) was T’Eln, a former premiere of the Vulcan Science Academy now in her 217th year and serving as the director of the Beagle’s Astrophysics and Stellar Cartography department.

“Your human intuition is congruent with the readings we have examined over the past 3 weeks.” T’Eln’s eyes were as cold as her voice, conveying not the slightest sense of compassion. Simply being in the same room as the ancient vulcan was quite disturbing. Listening to her or looking into her eyes tended to cause even other vulcans to flinch - particularly when doing both at the same time. “Falok, you will explain.”

“It may appear that the machine intelligence is stuck in a loop, endlessly repeating the same routine,” said the younger vulcan. Falok was the astrophysics team leader. “Careful analysis over the past 3 weeks indicates a far more dynamic process. The code is continually re-writing itself. It has to be re-written every cycle to take into account the changes in the system, drift of each vessel and each machine... In short, some program within the overall code for the AI Seribo armada is deliberately re-starting the process and actively re-writing lower level and upper level command codes to maintain this equilibrium.”

“And our analysis of the radio bubble produced by the race that built those machines indicates they have maintained this equilibrium for nearly 80 years,” added Dr. Arthur Rush.

“Considering the dynamic nature of this equilibrium, it would be unwise to rely on its stability,” Falok intoned. “A change in the system inputs could easily upset the loop. One way, or the other.”

“So this armada has a devil on one shoulder telling it to build these horrible engines and an angel on the other telling it to take them apart?” asked Rhonda Carter.

Dr. Rush shook his head “I think it is a single program responding to changing conditions. Now, unfortunately, I’m relying on leaps of human intuition...”

T’Eln raised an eyebrow. “Human intuition occasionally provides very interesting starting points for logical analysis. Please, illuminate us, Dr. Rush.”

Coming from any other vulcan, such a statement could easily be taken as a subtle insult. But the ancient vulcan had purged all her emotions

through the kohlinar and there was no hint of any such subtlety in her demeanor. T'Eln simply said exactly what she meant. Coldly. The sound of her voice was enough to make ice seem warm by comparison.

Dr. Arthur Rush took her statement at face value. "This is a very stable, isolated system, where life has flourished for billions of years. As a result, the humanoid species that created the radio bubble we recorded entered a hydrocarbon era approximately 140 years ago, which led to a greenhouse effect. Which, in turn, inspired an environmentalist movement on both continents. Two very different cultures, each blaming the other for an environmental disaster they were both causing..."

"And what, regarding the base code and the single program you referenced earlier, do you intuit from this history, Arthur?" asked T'Eln.

"Someone wanted to return the 8th planet, which the natives called "Bor", to an environmental golden age - a primeval paradise - and they wrote what would become the base code for that armada," Dr. Rush replied. "We actually have it. The proto-code was transmitted by radio approximately 85 years ago. It was written as a virus. Our computer systems are far too well-protected and too sophisticated to be taken over by it. But their systems... Well, we have their systemic architectures as well - all of that got broadcast at one point or another..." Dr. Rush was speaking more quickly, brown eyes sparkling. He turned to address the Dean of Ship:

"Sakura, with your permission I would like to re-task as many resources as you can spare. I think we can recreate the code series that led to the creation of this armada. If I'm right, the armada exists to seek out threats to the Bor environment and neutralize them. In so doing, it first neutralized the cultures on both continents and destroyed their cities, then created a vast armada to go out and seek new threats to neutralize - threats scattered across our galaxy. But it only has one model for superluminal transportation and as soon as the armada is completed, it identifies itself as a threat to the Bor environment and dismantles itself. Only to rebuild itself for the same purpose. All driven by a dynamic code that is constantly assessing and reassessing environmental threats to the 8th planet in the system..."

SBA Episode 3, Scene 13: Beagle U.

Chapter Summary

A lecture on economy...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 3: Yours Is No Disgrace

Scene 13: Beagle U.

3.13

Beagle U.

“It’s all about identifying the coin of the realm.”

The U.S.S. Mako, the U.S.S. Beagle and the U.S.S. Escort had formed an ersatz space station, with the two smaller ships docked on either side of the Mako. Commodore Yui Song had never anticipated that the first official mission of her task force would involve more than a month of station keeping while scientists poured through mountains of data.

This created a hazard to morale for crew who weren’t involved in the data analysis. One solution was to involve as many people as possible in the data analysis, but most of the analysis was well beyond the training of even highly trained officers.

The Mako was the only ship of the three that had a holodeck and Commander Jason Bates, Yui Song’s first officer, had soon found himself overwhelmed with requests for its use. Far more requests than a single holodeck could begin to accommodate. So after two weeks of increasingly restive requests, Commander Bates was more than ready to turn that responsibility over to any competent person who would be insane enough to volunteer. Even if that person was a ferengi...

“Humans have lived in a post-scarcity society for so long that most of them have forgotten how a market-based economy works,” Trader Pel continued. “This is a serious strategic blunder. There is always an economy. You just have to identify the coin of the realm. And the coin of the realm within the Federation is experience. Individual experience. Shared group experience. And most valuable and difficult to arrange, shared intimate experience. Which is why the holodeck schedule has become such a vital resource for this task force.”

The minuscule ferengi was holding forth in the U.S.S. Beagle’s conference room and among his students for this lecture were the leadership of all three ships and all of the U.S.S. Beagle’s department heads, as well as the entire UFP diplomatic corps.

“It is painfully evident that no one took economic forces into account when designing this task force. The U.S.S. Beagle is designed to study new civilizations remotely for very long periods of time before making contact, if ever. That means that what we’ve been doing for the past 6 weeks, standing off from the Al Seribo star system at a distance of 15 light years for an indeterminate period of time while you people study readings from your probes, is the expected operating norm for the majority of missions.”

“If your task force is to maintain operational readiness and the crew morale needed to support such a mission profile, you must understand your own economy. The economy of experience. While we ferengi are noted for our preference for gold-pressed latinum, we are capable of recognizing other currencies and making use of them. Suffice it to say that I have made a substantial profit from my scheduling of the holodeck. Some of these profits have taken the form of shared meals with interesting conversationalists. Some have taken the form of lessons in self-defense. Others in material goods.”

“Humans might think that even this type of profit realization is avaricious in nature. But it is absolutely essential for managing increasing demand on a limited resource. People wanting to use the holodeck now realize they must bring something of value into the negotiations - not just for my services, but also to negotiate with other users who might be willing to trade their place in line for other consideration. And any ferengi can tell you that realizing your own economic power, that you have something of value to contribute that other people want, is tremendously ennobling. How you people could miss this vital aspect of your own natures is, frankly, beyond me.”

"Most importantly, while I am very good at scheduling and I did come up with a number of innovations to maximize the potential load of the holodeck, it is by understanding this experiential economy that I was able to reduce and manage that load... and increase the maintenance cycles not only for the holodeck, but for a number of supporting systems..."

Commander Bates spoke up. "We do have a regular maintenance schedule for those systems. A schedule that is established by our standard operating procedures..."

"A schedule that is entirely inadequate for supporting the level of demand arising from the Mako's crew alone, given weeks of station-keeping in blank space," Pel rejoined. "Not to mention two additional crews."

Trader Pel looked around, making eye contact with the specific individuals he had proposed this plan with. Captain Skip Howard. Commodore Yui Song. Dean Sakura Nakamura Holland. Astrophysics and Stellar Cartography Director T'Eln... It was time to make this proposal public:

"But the most creative use of the Mako's holodeck will not begin to satisfy the experiential economic needs for the population of this task force. This economy, as it stands, will not survive a five-year mission. These people will start to tear themselves apart before you are a year into this mission. You need a much bigger economic incentive for this population than the recreation and training the holodeck can provide."

"And the answer to that need is gathered right here in this room. Seven departments and more than 15 sub-division specialties. What I am proposing is to enroll the crews of the U.S.S. Mako, the U.S.S. Escort and the U.S.S. Beagle in Beagle University,,,"

Sakura would like a little chat



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3.14

[A Little Chat](#)

“Trader Pel has turned all of our thinking upside down and given us all a new paradigm to work with. So we started puzzling out the economy of enforced ecological purity.”

Dr. Arthur Rush was again holding forth in the Beagle’s executive conference room. This time, not only were the department leadership at the table, but his explanation was being transmitted throughout all three vessels with the majority of crew watching on various monitors.

“That turned out to be a very dry rut,” Dr. Rush continued. “While the machines are clearly intelligent, they do not appear to be self aware or even very sophisticated when compared to even early Federation standards. It turns out that simplicity is a matter of design. It wasn’t until we came across the designer’s manifesto that we began to understand why. This is Rrpp SnsI - their names are quite difficult to pronounce...”

The face that appeared on viewscreens across the three ships was vaguely reminiscent of a Neanderthal with a heavy brow ridge, thick, red eyebrows, rough, orange skin, and a tuft of flyaway reddish hair:

“Therefore there will be no turning back. There is only one way to save the Bor. Save the Bor from your greed and stupidity. Save the Bor not only for us, but for all the living things we share this world with. There will be no negotiating. I have removed all inputs - you cannot reprogram the manager. We will lay your cities low. We will control your numbers. You should have known when you brought charges against...”

“Freeze,” said Dr. Rush. The message had included several jump edits.

“We had to edit the message pretty heavily to put that small amount together.” Rush gestured toward the image of the orange-skinned borean. “He goes on for nearly 2 hours, most of it whining about how he was persecuted and driven out of a prestigious educational institution and lots of dark threats - which he appears to have made good on. But what makes this broadcast unique is that it didn’t come from the 8th planet. It originated from orbit and was directed toward the planet.”

“Doesn't sound like a popular guy,” observed Risl Phynyx, the assistant director of planetary science from the Denobulan Planetary Society.

“You wouldn’t think so,” Dr. Rush rejoined. “He’s a dreadful bore. But we were able to research him through the broadcast history. He had a substantial, surprisingly loyal and shockingly violent following. They maintained a reign of terror on the northwestern continent for a decade before the machines took over and destroyed their civilization on both continents. This was nearly 80 years ago, so he is probably long dead by now.”

Serafina Novikova, an elderly Czech woman, was the diplomatic services director from the United Federation of Planets. “We are facing a conundrum,” she said. “The machine intelligence is on the verge of becoming superluminal. It is not, according to UFP standards, self-aware, which means our standard protocol might have very unpredictable results...”

“Wait,” objected Captain Rhonda Carter. “That thing... those things... got into my head. They all but told me they are sorry for what they have done to those people... What they are doing to those people...” The captain of the U.S.S. Escort had regained her strength and dyed her short brush of gray hair a bright, cobalt blue.

“There is nothing in their main code that even begins to suggest that level of sophistication,” Dr. Rush said.

Captain Skip Howard spoke up. “You’re looking at the code as it was written nearly 80 years ago. These machines have rebuilt themselves, added more processing power, perhaps developed some emergent properties since then.”

“But there is no way to communicate with them,” Dr. Rush rejoined. “There is no interface.”

“So they created one,” said Trader Pel.

“And now it’s our turn,” said Sakura Nakamura Holland. “We have a way to talk to them. We know their language. The question is, what are we going to say?”

“What are you proposing?” asked Commodore Yui Song.

“We penetrate their perimeter with a probe that will consist of a negotiating unit, communications unit and a transporter,” Sakura replied. “The probe will transport the communications and negotiation units directly into the central processor for the armada.”

“Why a negotiation unit?” asked Captain Rhonda Carter. “Why not communicate via the comm unit we’re installing?”

“Because we’re giving them the off switch,” said Sakura. “So they can re-insulate themselves from contact, if that is what they prefer. But we’d like to have a little chat, first.”

"And what are we going to say?" asked Carter.

Commodore Yui Song responded: "Let's start with, 'Hello'..."

SBA Episode 3, Scene 15: Dirty Holes

Chapter Summary

Death defying, mutilated, armies scattered the Earth...
Crawling out of dirty holes, their morals, their morals disappeared.



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 3: Yours Is No Disgrace

Scene 15: Dirty Holes

3.15 Dirty Holes

Aaooa Auli crept carefully through the tall fronds. The mud covering her entire body was starting to dry and she was some distance from the river and even further from her hole. She stopped to listen. Her shard gun was more than adequate protection from predators - even the large and tough huffoes avoided boreans. Male boreans were much more of a concern, but as long as she only had to deal with two of them, they could be bargained with.

Boreans rarely travelled in large groups because of the real danger: the managers. Shard guns were largely ineffective against managers - a lucky shot might disrupt their hydraulic systems, but shard guns were too erratic to rely on for such pinpoint accuracy.

The managers were noisy. The sound of their humming and grinding could be heard sometimes nearly a kilometer away. They were fast. And they could detect boreans by body heat, smell and sound. They had a hard time seeing through mud, however, which was why whenever the boreans left their holes, they would cake themselves with mud.

Tonight was different. The sky was filled with light from the explosions and meteors ripped across the heavens. And there was no sound of the managers.

Cautiously, slowly, Auli crept out into the open, her shard gun deployed. She had made it halfway to the loeki tree, her attention absorbed by the heavy, fruit laden boughs when she stumbled and fell - right on top of a manager! Her shriek echoed from the nearby hills, but she quickly bottled it up.

This manager was quite clearly dead. Its metal eyes were open, but there was no light. The machine's right arm and claws were soaked with its own hydraulics - it had apparently ripped the hydraulic cable out of its own neck. The fluid was a light green and smelled sickly sweet - Auli knew it was extremely poisonous and she avoided touching it.

She stilled herself suddenly, lying motionless across the dead murder machine. She could hear the sibilant sound of male boreans talking nearby. She held her breath, listening intently. Two distinct voices. Two males could be managed - could even be pleasant. Then she identified a third.

Long ago, in a civilized time that she had only heard rumors about, the males had been protective of females - cared for them - treasured them - provided everything a female asked for. A single female might manage relationships with as many as a dozen males and never fear for her safety.

But in these times Auli knew she would not survive contact with more than two males at a time. This group had heard her shriek and they were approaching, seeking her out.

Auli checked the reloader on her shard gun and released the safety. Unlimbered the cracker from her belt and laid the large, hammer-like weapon to her side. Her shard gun would be good for 2 or 3 sustained bursts - maybe 4 if it didn't jam. She positioned herself to use the dead manager to protect her flank.

Three males.

It was kill or be killed...

3.15

SBA Episode 3, Scene 16: Silly Human Race

Chapter Summary

Yesterday, a morning gave a smile upon your face.
Ceasar's Palace. The Morning Glory.
Silly human... Silly human... Silly human race...

On a sailing ship to nowhere, leaving any place...
Let the summer change to winter...
Yours is no disgrace.



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 3: [Yours Is No Disgrace](#)

Scene 16: [Silly Human Race](#)

3.16

Silly Human Race

Blue fingernail polish. Blue eyeshadow. Colors of mourning and remembrance.

Commodore Yui Song found herself wondering if Skip Howard was empathizing or sympathizing.

When she had been a girl growing up in Shanghai, a teenage Song and her girlfriends used to wear dark pink or light brown eyeshadow, which had made her feel sexy - or at least less self-conscious about her looks. She had been such a beauty and had never even realized it.

Morning glory.

Yui Song brooded over the tea before pouring out a cup for Skip and a cup for herself. She had invited Captain Howard to her quarters, but not Captain Carter. Blue eyeshadow she could handle. But she was in no mood to handle Carter's newly cobalt blue hair. Maybe Rhonda Carter was trying to recapture some of her lost youth as well - she was nearly 50. Skip Howard was barely in his 30's.

Howard was keeping his silence, but seemed entirely at ease. Which, for the moment, made him the perfect companion for Yui Song's mood. She finally sighed heavily and tried to put her thoughts into words: "Nearly 2 months of work. It just feels like such a disaster. And all around us everyone is celebrating. I suppose because those humanoids, the boreans, get a second chance at civilization. Their machines frated out and destroyed themselves just seconds after our negotiation and communications processors were added to them. And everyone's so proud that we were so clever. All of them talking about Captain Kirk."

"You should understand their mood better than anyone, Song," Skip Howard observed. "We've been through one existential crisis after another with semi-biological antagonists. The Founders. The Borg. And here were these machines, programmed to murder and torment some very human-looking aliens. Just waiting for their chance to terrorize the Federation with their subspace shattering engines..."

"It's precisely that biological prejudice that bothers me," Yui Song rejoined. "We made first contact with a promising species - a strange new civilization - and in seconds they self-destruct. As if we had dug up a conundrum designed by James T. Kirk himself. To make the machine self-destruct because of some contradiction in its programming..." Commodore Yui tried not to be too obvious in her scrutiny of the young captain of the U.S.S. Beagle.

"But that is exactly what we did, Song," said Skip Howard. "We expanded their frame of reference. And against that new context they diagnosed their own existence as an environmental threat." Howard took a breath. "What do we do when we introduce ourselves to any new, proto-superluminal culture? We tell them all about the Federation. The perfect, well balanced, environmentally sensitive, weather satellite controlled, biologically dominated Federation and our humble, helpful, non-predatory machine servants..."

"The prejudice is built in," Yui Song mused.

“Well, we are rather... biological...” Skip Howard teased.

“We have to do better.” Yui poured another cup of tea, waited a moment before she drank it.

Skip Howard waited until the right moment, then: “Next time we’ll let T’Eln talk to the machines...”

Commodore Yui nearly spit out her tea. Coughed hard a few times. When she could breathe again, she looked up and said, “I’m going to pretend I never heard you say that...”

“Heard me say what?” was Captain Howard’s dry response.

Yui snorted, then assumed a more serious expression. “I guess what is eating at me is that it seemed that they had developed some sort of conscience. Of course, that’s just me interpreting Rhonda’s dreams. And Pel’s. And Lieutenant Kresid’s.” She looked down.

“I brought you something,” said Howard. He set a small box on the table.

Yui Song looked at it without touching it or opening it up. After a moment, Skip Howard opened it with a flourish.

“Eye shadow?” Song asked.

“Please, allow me...”

Commodore Yui leaned forward, her elbows on the table, chin in her hands. She closed her eyes and felt just the slightest touch on and above her eyelids. Light. Quick. Expert.

“Have a look...”

She opened her eyes to see that Skip Howard was holding a mirror. The application was extremely light and subtle. The same color as Howard was wearing, but far more subtle than the treatment Howard gave his own eyes. Oddly, it made her feel young again. Just a little like she remembered how she felt when she was a child playing with her girlfriends so very long ago.

“Always makes me feel better,” Howard observed, turning the mirror slightly. “Kind of a subtle feeling... like there are a few things that you can control.”

Captain Skip Howard handed the mirror to his commanding officer. Watched as she admired his handiwork. He got up and walked around behind her, looking into the reflection of her eyes in the mirror:

“So tell me, Song... What makes you so certain that the dreamers who contacted Rhonda and the others were those machines, and not somebody else?”

[Yours Is No Disgrace](#)

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