

## Preparing for a Little Trip

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## Preparing for a Little Trip

by [DavidFalkayn](#)

### Summary

Preparations begin for cross universal travel in "Universes in Collision": the newest story in the Raptor-verse

### Notes

This story is a direct continuation of "Kiss of the Raptor" as the two universes come together to fight a common threat.

## Making Plans

### *Valley Forge*

“Good morning, Sir.” Ashley smiled as she greeted the recently appointed commodore.

“Good morning, Commander.” Commodore Soren Magnussen smiled back at his newly promoted aide. “What’s first on today’s agenda?”

“Breakfast and conference with the senior staff.” Ashley promptly replied, “Then we’re off to Command Headquarters to check up on the trans-universe project.”

“Lead the way.” Soren grinned, “I don’t know about you, Commander, but I’m famished.”

“I could go for some breakfast myself after last night’s workout, Sir.” Ashley smirked. “The others should be waiting in the galley.”

“Then, Commander, let us be off.” Soren bantered back before inquiring in a more serious tone of voice, “Have you given anymore thought to the admiral’s offer?”

“It’s tempting, Sir.” Ashley answered back with a sigh, “But I don’t want to leave my friends on the *Princess*.”

“You won’t be.” The Danish commodore vowed, “I have no intention of busting up a good team, and I have a feeling that I’ll be requiring your group’s special skills on more than one occasion in the near future. You are command material, Ashley.” Soren declared earnestly, “And I’m not just saying that because we’re sleeping together. Admirals Quinn and Tuvok agree with me. You are capable of commanding a starship—not now...” he emphasized, “but sometime soon.”

“So what all’s involved in this new job other than my being your permanent aide?” Ashley inquired.

“First off, that lieutenant commander’s braid you’re wearing now will be made permanent. Second, you’ll be working under all of the section commanders on the *Forge*. Command under Zheren and myself...Engineering under Skavrin...Tactical/Security under Jeff...Sciences under Talana...and you’ll also spend some time with our new CMO. That will give you a good idea as to how the different branches operate and how they integrate with each other to make for a smooth running ship.”

“And after that?”

“Then, you’ll be working with the other ship captains...Hobson...Rosza...even the allied captains—with their permission, of course. From them you will learning how they exercise their commands and how to conduct joint operations. And...while you’re doing this...expect to be sent on missions with your team on the *Princess*. So...” The commodore asked with a crooked grin, “You up for the challenge?”

Ashley responded, her eyebrow raised in a sardonic gesture, “Bring it...Sir.”

“I sure could go for another helping of grits.” Lieutenant Commander Jeff Maxwell grinned as his commanding officer joked.

“That’s your third helping already Jeff.” Soren laughed.

“Blame Dixie.” Ashley quipped, “She’s been turning him on to southern cooking.”

“I think I’m going to get another glass of Tor’a juice before we start the meeting.” Lieutenant Commander Skavrin, a portly Tellarite who had been the *Valley Forge*’s chief engineer ever since Magnussen took command, growled as he got up from his seat.

“How are you doing in your new job Dr. Murakawa?” Commander Zheren, the *Constitution*-class starship’s Andorian first officer asked the *Valley Forge*’s new Chief Medical Officer, an attractive woman with Asian features.

Speaking with a Hellenic accent, Dr. Murakawa replied with a grin, “I’m enjoying it. The facilities are very complete and the medical staff most efficient.”

“Glad to hear it.” Jeff replied, “Where were you stationed before coming aboard?”

“Starbase 45.” The doctor responded, “I got bored with shore duty and requested reassignment.”

“I can relate to that.” Ashley grinned, “I hated garrison duty. Just sitting around all day doing nothing but looking at the barracks walls.”

“From your accent, I’d say you’re Centauran.” Soren noted, “Am I right?”

“Partly.” Doctor Murakawa grinned. “My mother’s Centauran. Father was from Tokyo. They divorced when I was a child so I’d spend a year on Earth with my father and then a year on Centaurus with mother.”

“I read about Centauri Four while I was taking my Academy courses.” Ashley queried, “These...aliens...”

“The Preservers.” Soren interjected.

“Right.” Ashley nodded, “They took ancient Greeks and settled them there—right?”

“From Ionia to be specific.” Dr. Murakawa answered, “Centaurans are direct descendants of the ancient Greeks and a lot of our culture is still very much Hellenic.” Cracking a smile, she quipped, “I have a chiton that I’ll wear at times, but usually it’s only for special occasions because it’s a pain in the ass to put on.”

“Is there anything you need, Doctor?” Soren inquired.

Shaking her head, the Asian-Centauran physician responded, “No. We’re all set.”

“Where’s Talana?” Jeff gesturing at the empty chair, “Did she decide to get an early start?”

“More like her and her team never stopped.” Ashley quipped, “She said that they’d stumbled on to something and were following it through. Her and her group are first on the agenda, Commodore.”

“Good. Soren nodded, “I’m looking forward to seeing this breakthrough.” Speaking to his engineer, he asked, “What your status, Skavrin.”

“My engines are purring like a sehlat, Sir. Just give the word.”

“If all goes well, old friend.” Soren grinned, “You’ll have that soon.” Pausing for a moment, he rose to his feet, “If there’s nothing else, let us get the day started.”

### ***Drozana Station—Universal Alliance Command Headquarters—Science Division***

“First stop...Science Lab.” Ashley grinned as she and the Commodore passed through the door into the laboratory.

“I hear you and your people have been putting in a bit of overtime, Lieutenant Commander.” Soren remarked to his Andorian science officer in a teasing voice as he and his aide entered the lab.

“You might say we have, Sir.” Talana bantered back, “I’ll let our newest teammate, Zara, explain.”

“What have you got for me, Zara?” Soren asked the obviously excited quarian astrophysicist.

Zara enthusiastically explained, “It took some work, but we were finally able to determine the exact resonances and frequencies we need to open up a stable portal linking the universes.”

“Stable?” Ashley interjected, “You’re saying that we’ll be able to maintain contact?”

“Exactly!” Lieutenant Commander Talana Zha’Thara eagerly responded. “That is...if a connection is maintained from the other side as well.”

“In other words the door can be opened and closed at will by either party.” Commodore Magnussen surmised.

“Correct.” Zara affirmed, “Unstable portals can be opened from one end or the other, but to keep the portals stable, it will require both universes maintaining the connection.”

“That will make the access points important strategic objectives.” Soren mused as he considered the ramifications of what he had just been told.

“While some of the powers on the other end might be eager for a stable connection...” Ashley pointed out, drawing on her prior experience under Shepard’s command, “there will be others who will oppose it. And I can all but guarantee that there will be a political free for all over who controls the portal entrance.”

“That’s something we’ll have to let the diplomats wrangle over when and if the time comes.” Commodore Magnussen declared with a frown. “All we can do is offer suggestions. Hopefully, they’ll listen to them.”

“They’re politicians.” Ashley wryly commented, earning an amused smirk from her lover.

“We’ll just have to make them think it was their idea, Commander.” Addressing his science officer, the Commodore inquired, “What about the other research, Talana?”

“Twesata, Rana, and Lieutenant Velen are dealing with the augmented and genetically altered prisoners. They think they’ve found something you might be interested in.”

“They’re next on our list.” Commodore Magnussen acknowledged, “Anything else?”

“Yes, Sir. Dr. Treeya and Salome have been analyzing the artifacts she brought with her from the other universe. You might want to pop in on them.”

“They’re number three on our agenda.” Ashley pointed out, checking her padd.

“Finally...” Talana ended her report, “Our engineers—Treasure, Dixie, and Nelia have been hard at work on several projects.”

Nodding his head, the commodore answered back with a smile, “We’ll be sure to check in with them too. Now...unless there’s anything else?”

“No, Sir.” Talana replied with a cheeky grin, “If I might suggest, Commodore...why don’t the two of you go see Twes and Rana now.”

“And let you get back to work.” Soren chuckled, bantering back at Talana’s subtle smirk and wink. “Very well, Commander, we’ll let you get back to your research.”

“Any results?” Soren asked as he entered the lab where Twesata and Rana were working, the two lovers staring at a computer model on their screen.

“Oh!” Rana exclaimed, startled by the sudden interruption, “Commodore. Yes...I think we might have something. Come and take a look.”

“These are the results we’ve gotten from a genetic scan of the krogan.” Twesata explained, “Somehow or other—we’re still working on figuring out how exactly—they’ve managed to fuse Borg and Reaper nanites while also grafting Gorn tissue and neurons.”

“They seem to have found a way to take advantage of the rapid regeneration capability that krogans naturally possess along with their redundant organs.” Lieutenant Commander Velen, the Denobulan science officer from the *Aeolia*, interjected, pointing to a series of numbers on the screen. “These are normal krogan alleles.”

“Now look at these...” Rana instructed, pointing to another sequence. “Those were altered by Borg and Reaper tech.

“I’m no biologist...” Ashley commented, “But it looks to me like the Borg and Reaper nanites are rewriting the genetic code.”

“They are.” Twesata concurred, “But what’s even more remarkable is that they’re doing it in cooperation.”

“Somehow...someday...” Rana concluded, “They’ve discovered means of making Reaper and Borg technology work and play well with each other.”

“That’s not the most pleasant piece of news I’ve heard this morning.” Soren frowned. “But...I’ve got a feeling there’s more. All right...” The Danish starship commander sighed, “Lay it on me.”

Pausing momentarily as she called up a new image on the screen, the Betazoid science officer explained, “What we’ve also discovered from non-invasive scans taken from the infected passengers and crew of the *Dawn Star*, is that the Thorian spores also combine with the Borg and Reaper nanites to produce a very cohesive form of hive mind almost impossible to break.”

“In other words...” Ashley grumbled, “The Borg Collective on steroids.”

“Right.” Lieutenant Commander Velen confirmed. “We’re looking for a means to unravel the very complex genetic, molecular, and even sub-molecular rewiring...” the Denobulan science officer shook his head dejectedly, “but haven’t had any success.”

“This is beyond even what Saren had you doing—isn’t it Rana?” Ashley queried the asari scientist.

“Most definitely.” Rana answered back. “I was exploring how the Thorian spores might be able to combat indoctrination, but what they’ve done is use those spores to not so much combat it as direct it. In short...they’ve taken it to the next level. Instead of using the spores as a weapon, they’re using them as a tool.”

“So...there’s nothing we can do for these poor people.” Soren concluded somberly.

“Not yet, Sir.” Twesata responded, “But we haven’t given up. Just...” the lovely Betazoid winced as her asari lover squeezed her hand, “please don’t ask me to try to go back into their minds.”

“I won’t let you, *siha*.” Rana promised, explaining to the Commodore, “The time she did, she nearly lost her sanity. I am not going to let that happen to her again.”

“Don’t worry.” Soren assured, “No one’s going to ask her or you to repeat that experience. You have my word.”

“Thank you, Sir.” The lovers responded in unison gratefully.

“If there’s nothing more...” The Commodore announced as his eyes glanced at the exit, “We’ll be on our way. Keep me posted if you find out anything else.”

“Dr. Treeya and Lieutenant Jenkins, Sir?” Ashley asked as she walked beside her lover.

Nodding his head, Soren affirmed. “Let’s take a look at what they’re doing, shall we, Commander?”

“Aye, Sir.”

Entering the archaeology lab with his aide, Soren called out to the two scientists examining various items neatly categorized and numbered at a table. “Dr. Treeya...Lieutenant Jenkins...I understand you’ve found something interesting.”

“Maybe.” The asari archaeologist responded as she beckoned the commodore and Ashley to the table. “What you’re seeing here is a collection of artifacts from both of our universes. Notice anything special?”

Carefully examining the relics on the table, Commodore Magnussen commented, pointing at a pair of stelae, “Those two...they look like they might have been made by the same culture.”

“Good guess, Sir.” Salome said in her usual languid tone of voice. “Take a look at the engraving on both of the slabs. See the similarities in the pictographs?”

“Yes.” Ashley interjected as she peered at the two monuments. “Do you have any idea who made them and what they mean?”

“We’re still trying to figure that out.” Dr. Treeya admitted, “What I can tell you is that they came from different universes. This one...” she

pointed at one of the stelae, "...came from the artifacts I found on Fehl Prime in the other universe. And the other one..." she gestured to the relic next to it, "...was found by an archaeological team on Geron III in this universe."

"Which means that they were probably left by the same people." Soren surmised, "Do you know how old they are?"

"At least a billion years old..."

Letting out a low whistle, Ashley remarked, "That puts them as older than any of the species we've run into in either of our universes. What about your universe, Salome? Didn't you tell me that your people along with Captain Rodenko and his crew investigated some ruins that were very old? Do you think the same people made them too?"

Salome confirmed with a nod of her head, "It does appear that they were made by the same people. The only problem is..."

"You don't know who they are or where they're originally from." Soren concluded.

"Exactly." Salome acknowledged with a frown. "Since we're finding these artifacts in multiple universes, that would indicate that this race is not only very old...but also very advanced and powerful and that there is a very strong probability they don't belong to any of our universes."

"In other words, they might be our mysterious puppet masters." Ashley conjectured.

"Maybe." Dr. Treeya tentatively affirmed before sounding a note of caution, "However, we can't rule out the possibility that another race such as the Iconians, Reapers, Undine, or Borg are using that technology for their own ends."

"I see..." Soren drawled, "So...have you been able to figure out what the stelae are saying?"

"No." Salome shook her head before explaining, "Usually, you can crack an ancient language by analyzing the languages it stems from and work your way back."

"Like the Rosetta Stone?" Ashley queried.

"Somewhat." Salome replied, "Although the Rosetta Stone was a lucky break in that along with the Egyptian hieroglyphics, you also had a translation in demotic Greek and a transitional script. It was much easier to work back from that once the scholars knew what to look for."

"We don't have that here, I'm afraid." Dr. Treeya interjected. "We're having to figure this out cold...and..." she admitted ruefully, "...we're not having much...really any...success."

"It's like trying to decipher Linear A or ancient Harrapan, but worse because we don't have any frame of reference." Salome heaved a dejected sigh. "Hopefully, once we open up the portal between our universes, we can find something over there that'll help us unravel this mess."

"I see." Soren acknowledged, letting out a breath of air, "We'll let you get back to your work, then."

"Engineering?" Ashley inquired.

Nodding his head, Soren affirmed, "Engineering. I'm curious to see what Nelia and her people have dreamed up for us."

"Knowing Nelia..." Ashley chuckled, "It's NSFS."

"NSFS?" Soren smirked.

"Not Safe For Starfleet." Ashley grinned in response. "C'mon. Let's see what they've got."

### ***Engineering Team***

"Ya'll are pullin' my leg!" Dixie laughed as Treasure finished her story.

Lieutenant Commander Angela 'Treasure' Barrows, the Texas-descended buxom blonde *Aeolia* chief engineer giggled. "Candy an' Atris will back me up if ya'll don't believe me. They were there when it happened!"

"You tellin' me you jumped up on a table at Quarks during a barroom brawl with some Klingons, pulled up your shirt and flashed 'em!" Dixie's Alabama accented voice and laughter filled the room. "No way!"

"If Ah'm lyin' Ah'm dyin'!" Treasure swore jokingly, raising her right hand as if taking an oath. "It was back when I was an ensign on the ol' *Sutherland*."

"Where was the captain when this went down?" Dixie asked.

"Captain Shelby?" Nelia quipped, "No...not that Shelby! Not the Admiral Shelby who's married to Admiral Calhoun. This was a different Shelby entirely. I'm not sure what happened to her."

"I ain't either." Treasure interjected with a shake of her head. "All I heard was that one day she all of a sudden upped an' resigned her commission and just took off. Don't know where and don't know why."

"Anyway..." Nelia grinned, continuing her story, "Shelby was screwing DS 9's Chief Medical Officer in his quarters. My uncle was on the station at the time—he was part of a border cutter crew that had docked to resupply and was there when the fight with the Klingons broke out. He used to joke about how he got cold cocked by some Klingon while he was looking at Treasure's phaser banks."

“See! I tol’ ya!” The buxom blonde engineer cried out triumphantly.

“Ahem...”

“Oh!” A now red-faced Treasure exclaimed, “Commodore! We didn’t know...”

“Obviously.” Commodore Magnussen interjected as he tried to hide the smirk that wanted to appear on his face, especially as his aide wasn’t even trying to hide her snickers. “Do you have anything to report?”

Now all business, Nelia took over for her stammering teammate. “We’ve been busy trying to adapt some of the technology of Dixie’s universe with ours.”

“Any success?”

“Some.” Nelia replied, “Edi, Treasure and Dixie have done most of the work, so I’ll let them fill you in.”

“Go ahead, Edi.” Treasure encouraged, “After all...it was your idea, Sugar.”

“We have found a way to integrate medigel into your universe’s armor systems.” The mobile AI reported. “We can begin producing prototypes immediately.”

“Do so.” Soren responded, “Anything else?”

“Yes.” The AI answered back, “This breakthrough, however, is theoretical at present.”

“Go ahead, Sugar...” Dixie urged, “Tell ‘em.”

“We think that we have found a means by which we could make mass effect relays work in this universe.”

“How so?” The Commodore inquired, his curiosity aroused. “I thought you needed this element zero substance to make it work.”

“Correct, Sir.” Edi confirmed, “That is why this study is purely theoretical at this stage. However, should a stable corridor between the two universes be established...”

“Trade routes could carry eezo in exchange for stuff unique to this universe—like dilithium.” Ashley interjected, receiving a nod of affirmation from the AI.

“That is correct.”

“Right.” Soren acknowledged before further inquiring, “Any success on finding a way to ensure the stability of a portal once we do open it.”

“Yes, Sir.” Treasure affirmed with a triumphant grin on her face. “Since we now know the resonances and frequencies, Ah can adjust our deflectors to transmit a dark energy burst that should open up a portal. Once we open the portal, it should remain stable for as long as a gateway remains open on the other side.”

“That’s useful.” The commodore noted, “But it depends on us controlling the other side as well. Do you have anything that would keep the portal open on our end in the event the other end closes? I’d much prefer having a door open in the event we have to beat a hasty retreat.”

“Way ahead of you, Commodore.” Nelia responded cheekily, “Satellites located at certain points that we’ve already identified can be set that will transmit the frequencies to keep the door open or closed from our end. Here are the specs. You can run them by the others if you want.” She then handed the Danish commodore her padd. “We can have the satellites deployed in less than a week.”

Nodding his head, Soren gave his assent. “Do it. I’ll set up a meeting with the admirals. Captain Terre...hold yourself in readiness. I have a feeling they will want you and the other project heads at the briefing. Lieutenant Commander...” The commodore turned to his raven-haired aide, permitting a slight smile to come to his lips, “Looks like you might get to see your family before Christmas after all.”

“Yes, Sir.” Ashley responded with a big grin.

Turning his attention back to the engineers, Soren smiled as he praised them, “Good work, everyone. Unless you hear otherwise, proceed with your plans. As of now, we are go for extra-universal travel.”

# On the Eve of Departure

## Chapter Summary

The crews take the time to relax before their adventure begins. Lot's of character development here and some foreshadowing

### *Admiral's Briefing*

"We've examined your reports." Admiral Kererek declared, speaking for his fellow admirals. "Are you sure that a portal can be safely opened?"

"Quite certain, Sir." Commodore Magnussen replied, "My engineering team is ready to deploy the generator satellites. All we need is your approval for us to proceed."

After several moments during which the admirals confabbed with each other in barely audible tones, Kererek spoke with an incline of his head, "Very well. Approval has been granted. Diplomats from each power have arrived and will accompany your expedition. Secure control of the nexus point and then at your discretion proceed into the other universe and make contact. Also..." the Romulan admiral requested as a yeoman handed a padd to the commodore, "...if you would please pass this on to Commander Kaval? He should be the one to deliver this, along with our congratulations to Subcommander Avesti on your meeting. She has earned it."

Reading the padd, a slight smile crossed the Danish commodore's lips, "Aye, Sir. I will gladly do so."

"Dismissed and may the Elements guide your path, Commodore Magnussen." Admiral Kererek declared as he rose to his feet, effectively ending the meeting.

"Qapla!" General Martok exclaimed as he also rose from his chair. "May you enjoy success."

As the meeting ended, Soren addressed the captains under his command, "Wrap up what business you have on the station and call your crews back from their shore leaves. We depart in twenty-four hours." Turning to Ashley, he whispered, "You might want to tell Ajun to get ready as well. As she is entering the Academy with the next class, I have the authority to appoint her as an acting ensign. If she wants the job, she's assigned to the *Valley Forge* until the next Academy class year begins."

"Yes, Sir." Ashley grinned in response, "This will make her day, Commodore."

"Yes..." Soren cleared his throat, "Remind her that she will have to keep up on her studies and pass her final exams along with carrying out all of her shipboard duties. That's a heavy load for anyone to juggle."

"She can do it, Sir." The former Alliance gunnery chief answered back reassuringly.

Soren nodded his head, "Just make sure she understands what she's getting into."

Lowering her voice as she made sure that no one other than her Danish lover could hear her, Ashley vowed, "She'll do just fine, Soren. I promise."

"That's good enough for me." Soren smiled back, "So I hear Ajun's got a fella now?"

Smirking, Ashley responded with a chuckle, "More a date than a boyfriend."

"So you haven't had the chance to pull the Big Sister act yet?" Soren teased.

"I will tonight when he picks her up." Ashley laughed, "I promise, I'll make a holo for you."

"You do that." Soren joked back, "So...dinner and dancing tonight at Belen's after you finish terrorizing the new boy?"

"It's a date." Ashley responded, the pair briefly touching hands as they parted, "Tonight."

### *Drozana Station—Alliance and Council Refugees*

"Can I have everyone's attention, please?" Captain Elmer Forrester, master of the Systems Alliance and Council registered passenger freighter *MSV Dawn Star* cleared his throat as he announced his news to his fellow refugees gathered in one of the station's conference rooms. "I know many of you have been waiting a long time for this announcement. Well...the moment has arrived. I can now tell you that the Joint Taskforce will be attempting to open a gateway to our universe soon and we will be going with it. If all goes well, we'll all be home soon."

After giving his surviving passengers and crew a few moments of applause and cheering, the captain continued speaking, "I realize a few of you have begun to establish new connections and relations here. Those of you who choose to stay and who are not minors may remain if you so wish. However, before you make that decision I would urge you to be very sure of your choice. If you have family or other ties to our universe, you might want to consider resolving any issues there before starting a new life here. However, the choice is yours. You will not be forced to stay or go home against your will."

"I can't wait to get back home." One of the passengers shouted back in response. "I've got a daughter I haven't seen in months."

"Yeah...I miss my family too." Another passenger announced, declaring her intention to return home.

"Too many aliens here." One of the crew grumbled, "And too much mixing between species. It's unnatural."

"I'm staying." Another passenger declared, "I just asked Dyna to marry me and she said yes." Glaring at the crewman who had just spoken, he explained, "Dyna's Ktarian. I'm not going to put her through the bullshit some people on our Earth would give her just because she's got a line of bumps on her forehead."

"What about you, Orania?" Captain Forrester inquired, "Do you want to stay or go home?"

"I think..." The turian widow responded hesitatingly, "I think...I'm going to stay." After a momentary pause, she explained, "I don't have anything or anyone waiting for me back home and..." the turian equivalent of a smile appeared on her face, "I have found that I enjoy helping out with the school. I have something to live for here. I hope you understand."

Smiling at the turian woman, Forrester responded, "We all understand, Orania, and we wish you well."

"What will you be doing, Captain?" One of the crew called out.

The captain paused for a moment, "I will be leaving the White Star Line to start my own company with the backing of Belen and other shareholders in this universe and hopefully back home. If there's nothing else, I'll let you go now and thank you for everything."

### *Drozana Station—Edna's Diner*

"Wow!" Donna exclaimed as she and Atris Nylisa, a Trojan Starfleet officer whom she had met the night before at Zsa-Zsa's party, entered the tiny diner together, the pair making their way to an empty booth. "A real diner! Does Belen own this like he owns just about everything else on the station?"

"I rent the space but the diner's all mine." A voice with a Pennsylvania Dutch accent belonging to a matronly woman with grey hair and a motherly smile announced, apologizing, "I'm sorry, dears, I didn't mean to listen in, but I couldn't help overhearing. I'm Edna." She introduced herself, offering her hand, "Welcome to my little hole in the wall."

"Thanks." Donna smiled back, taking the older woman's hand. Remarking on the nearly full restaurant, she remarked, "Looks like you're doing good business."

"Can't complain." Edna replied as she escorted the two women to their booth and handed them printed menus. Chuckling at the confused looks her new customers were giving her, the restaurant proprietor explained, "People like home cooking. This is an old fashioned diner like the one my mother and her mother and hers all the way back to...I don't know how long...twentieth century at least—probably earlier. All I know is that there has always been an Edna's and there always will be no matter the galaxy—or the universe I guess."

"So what do you recommend?" Donna asked as she perused the menu.

"Hmmm...let's see..." the matronly woman drawled as she took out an old fashioned note pad and pen, "Blueberry waffles with maple syrup and a side of bacon...orange juice...and coffee with cream and sugar for you." Her gaze now turned to the young Trojan, Edna suggested, "And for you, Miss, tulaberry pancakes with strawberry syrup, Eridani melons, and Aurigan Bovus milk to wash it down."

"Sounds good." Donna exclaimed, her breakfast companion readily agreeing.

"Great." Edna smiled, "I'll bring out the coffee and you two can sit and gab until your orders are ready."

"Still recovering from last night?" Atris chuckled as Donna poured cream and added sugar to her coffee.

"I didn't do anything too stupid—did I?" Donna groaned as she took a sip from her mug.

"Nah." Atris assured, "You managed to keep out of trouble. Oh...by the way..." the mauve-haired Trojan woman teased, "Anything happen with that hunk of a Capellan I saw you with?"

"Maybe." Donna smirked, "He asked me out to dinner." Taking another sip, the former purser inquired, "So...have you ever dated a Capellan?"

"No." Atris shook her head, "But I knew someone who had a Capellan boyfriend. She said that what they've always said about Capellan men is true. But...she likes to stretch the truth a little—if you know what I mean—so I want corroborating evidence.."

"Oh?" Donna smirked, "What sort of evidence?"

"I'll only tell you on the promise that if you find out you tell me and the rest of the Amigas later."

"All right." Donna giggled, "I promise. So...what is it?"

"She told me that the story about Capellan men being very well proportioned is true." Laughing, Atris exclaimed, "Don't forget...you promised...you gotta spill—and don't leave anything out."

"I promise!" Donna laughed, then as Edna arrived with their meals, she gasped in delight. "This looks delicious."



“Home cooked.” The portly woman declared, “Dig in. I’ll be by to check up you two later.”

“I’m going to be spending all week in the gym after this.” Atris chuckled before taking a bite of her pancakes.”

“Tell me about it.” Donna joked, pouring syrup over her waffles. “There’s gotta be a million calories here.”

“Good thing we’re both hungry.”

Just as the pair had finished their breakfast, Donna heard the last voice that she wanted to hear “Private party or can anyone join?”

“Private.” Donna responded, giving her former lover a curt reply as she added more cream to her coffee.

Shifting uncomfortably at the sudden rise in tension, Atris cleared her throat. “It’s all right, Donna, I gotta go now. I have to report aboard the *Princess*. Catch you later.”

Sitting down opposite his estranged companion, Donkey inquired in a low growl. “Have fun at the party?”

“As I matter of fact I did.” Donna replied with a snort. “Met an absolutely charming Capellan. He’s taking me out for dinner tonight.”

“I see.” The Alliance marine scowled, “So I guess you’ve gone native too.”

“Looks like it.” Donna retorted, “Guess you’re going back with the fleet?”

“Yeah.” Donkey replied, “Since Ashley deserted and put on that miniskirt, I was asked to serve as—Magnussen called it a liaison.”

“Makes sense.” The *Dawn Star* purser replied before inquiring further, “I assume you won’t be coming back?”

“Hell no! Not if I can help it! I hate this place! Too many aliens—too much intermixing. The humans here have hung out with aliens for so long—even going so far as marrying them and having children with them—that they’ve forgotten what it means to be human.” The marine gunnery chief with a scowl. “You, Ash and some of the others might have gone native, but I remember who and what I am—a real human.”

“Looks like this is where we say goodbye, then.” Donna declared as she got up from her seat.

“Looks like.” Donkey responded with a huff. “You can keep your paradise. I want to live where it’s real.”

### ***USS Belladonna***

“Tell everyone to get their partying done tonight, *dragam*, because we’re going to another universe in twenty-four hours.” Captain Zsuzsanna Rosza said to her executive officer as the pair stepped out of the captain’s luxurious bathtub.

“Was that what the comm you received earlier was about baby?” The olive-skinned, dark-haired first officer replied as she sensuously towed her lover down, pausing for a moment to linger at a sensitive spot.

“Mmmm...Hmmm...” Zsa-Zsa purred. Then all dried off, she repeated the procedure for her lover. “Time to get dressed, *dragam*. We’ve got work to do before our going away party at Belen’s tonight.”

“We’re having a party?” Elisa responded with a sensuous growl.

“Of course, dahling.” Zsa-Zsa answered back with a mischievous wink as she got dressed in the *Belladonna*’s standard female uniform of midriff top, short skirt, and thigh high boots. “Just the two of us this time. Dinner...then a holosuite program Nelia gave me.”

“Oooooohhh! Sounds good.” Elisa purred. “What’s the program?”

“It’s a surprise.” Zsa-Zsa teased, “Now hurry up *szereto*. I want to check our weapons systems and readiness.”

“Shall I call a drill now, Captain?” Eliza, now fully dressed herself and her voice tone all business, asked.

“*Igen*, dahling. And be very strict about response times. Assign extra duty to anyone who’s slacking off and restrict them to the ship. We’ll cut loose tonight, but I want to be ready for anything tomorrow.”

### ***USS Aeolia***

“Tell Treasure she needs to doublecheck her emissions shielding.” Captain Hobson, now wearing the new taskforce standard uniform, a 23<sup>rd</sup> century Starfleet uniform with captain’s insignia, instructed his Deltan executive officer, similarly clad in 23<sup>rd</sup> century regulation attire. “They are .054 micro-angstroms too high for my tastes.”

“That’s still well within the range of tolerances, Captain.” Commander Rysyl commented already anticipating her superior’s response.

“Starfleet’s range of tolerances is not mine, Commander.” Hobson rebutted, as his first officer and lover had expected. “Let us turn now to T’Pren’s department and then Sciences.” The Iceman read off a list of seemingly minor instances and issues until his first officer, seeing that they were alone, finally interrupted him.

“Chris? Don’t you think you’re being a little too...”

“Nitpicky?” The faintest traces of a smile played very briefly on the captain’s lips before being replaced by his usual placid, icy exterior. “Of course I am Anara. The crew expects it. It would put them more on edge if I weren’t. As you’ve probably already ascertained, there is a method to my seeming madness. While it might look like my insisting on bringing those emissions escaping through our cloak down by a mere .054 micro-angstroms is just me being my usual autocratic self, that small margin of error could prove crucial in maintaining stealth as we close with a potentially hostile fleet or planetary defenses.”

“Or probe systems still governed by the Prime Directive, yet also possessing the technology to potentially detect us through our cloaks.” Anara finished with a nod of her head.

“Exactly.” Hobson confirmed, “The same principle holds with the other departments. While I have absolutely no complaints with how our department heads are doing their jobs, as a matter of fact, they are performing splendidly, they expect me to...”

“Give them shit.” The Deltan executive officer finished with an amused smirk.

“Just so.” The Iceman responded, again with the faintest traces of a smile on his face. “My seeming pettiness keeps them on their toes. But you did bring up a valid point. It can be carried to an extreme. As we are moving out in twenty four hours, give the crew time off so that they can sort out any affairs that they need to or let off any excess energy they might possess.”

“I’ve known you for over ten years, Chris.” Anara declared with a slight chuckle, “And you continue to surprise me.”

“And you, me, my dear.” Hobson warmly responded before again putting on the mask of the stern martinet. “I want the crew fully alert and back at their posts promptly at 0800 hours tomorrow and wearing the new uniforms—and no—Terran Empire optional dress is not acceptable on this ship.”

“Aye, Captain.” Anara acknowledged with a smirk, “Treasure and T’Pren will be displeased. I think they were looking forward to wearing the Empire uniforms.”

Clearing his throat, Hobson drolly responded, “I’m sure they were, but they’ll adapt. Also, inform the crew that there is a trousers option for females who do not wish to wear the skirt.”

“Thank you, Captain. That will ease some of the issues a few of our female crew have expressed to me regarding the new/old uniforms.”

“Excellent. I want all adjustments made prior to our reaching the Coronado system with the rest of the fleet.”

“Understood, Captain.” The Deltan first officer crisply responded before inquiring in a more informal matter. “Anything else?”

“Yes.” A slight smile appeared on the stony-faced captain’s face, “Would you care to join me this evening for a night of dinner and dancing?”

A grin playing on the lovely Deltan’s face, Anara answered, “I thought you’d never ask.”

### ***USS Bellerophon***

“The orders just came in, Sir.” Commander Ilya Xylides reported, handing a padd to the burly man seated in the center seat of the *Nebula*-class starship. “We head out tomorrow.”

“Very good, XO.” Captain Boris Rodenko replied, his voice a low rumble. “Instruct all off-duty crew that they are to report aboard no later than 0800 Standard Time. Other than that, tell them to have a good shore leave—you also.”

“Aye, Sir.” The Halenoi first officer responded, brushing back a lock of purple hair. “And you, Captain?” she asked, a mischievous grin on her face, “I trust you’ll be taking your own advice and enjoying a little shore leave yourself.”

“Otherwise you’ll conspire with Dr. Vordus where he makes it an order that I do so.” Boris huffed with a crooked grin on his face. “I promise I will. I believe there is a baseball game between the Drozana Comets and K-7 Tribbles that I think I will attend.”

“Great.” Ilya grinned, “While you’re doing that, I’ll be having dinner with the first officer of the *D’ressa*. Have fun.”

“You too, XO.”

### ***Belen’s Lounge—Angie and T’Pren***

Holding her wineglass up, Angie murmured a toast before bringing the glass to her lips and taking a sip. “Happy birthday, Britt. I miss you.”

*“I’m here, silly. Where else would I be?”*

Smiling warmly at the phantom presence of her old friend, her fingers twirling a lock of golden-blond hair, Angie heaved a sigh as she whispered under her breath. “I know. I just wish you were here for real along with Nikki, Lisa, and everyone else.”

“Is everything all right?”

“Huh?” Angie startled from her reverie, turned her head and looked up to see an attractive Vulcan woman with long auburn hair looking down

on her, the Vulcan's face etched with concern. "Oh...I'm sorry. Ummm...everything's fine."

"Are you sure?" The Vulcan woman responded as she gestured at the vacant stool next to the young platinum-blond Starfleet officer.

Inclining her head in the direction of the vacant stool in invitation, Angie's lips turned up in a winsome smile, "Yeah, I'm fine. I was just remember my best friend Brittany's birthday party a few years ago." Chuckling the young lieutenant recalled, "Britt's boyfriend was helping us set up and dummy got some olives mixed up with the grapes."

"Yech." The lovely Vulcan woman made a face.

"Yep." Angie laughed throatily as Belen walked over to where the two women were sitting.

"Refill, Angie?"

"Yes, please." Angie nodded as the Ferengi bartender poured white wine into his customer's glass.

"Centauran Riesling." Belen declared before turning his attention to the Vulcan seated next to his other customer, "What about you, T'Pren? Your usual?"

"Please." The young Vulcan responded as she brushed back a lock of auburn hair.

"One Trillian aurea coming up." Belen acknowledged, returning with a snifter full of the clear liquor.

"Thanks, Bel." T'Pren said as she took a sip, "After what happened today, I needed this."

"Bad news from home?" Angie asked solicitously.

"Nothing I want to talk about right now." The emotional Vulcan answered, taking another sip.

"Okay." The platinum-blond nodded, "I can respect that."

"Thanks." The Vulcan woman smiled wanly. "No offense, but..."

"It's personal and we don't know each other." Angie finished with an amused chuckle, "Don't worry about it. I don't mind sticking to small talk."

Heaving a sigh, the Ferengi merchant grumbled as he watched his assistant spill drinks all over a pair of customers. "Sorry...I gotta go clean up Qwix's mess." Raising his voice he called out, "Qwix! What in the name of the Great Exchequer do you think you're doing! Get your lobes back to the storeroom---I'll take care of this!"

Chuckling, Angie quipped, "Looks like Qwix's about to have a very bad day."

"Looks like." The v'tosh ka'tur Vulcan responded with a smile as she held out her hand, "Oh...I'm sorry...I forgot my manners. I'm T'Pren."

"Hi T'Pren." The platinum-blond smiled back as she took T'Pren's offered hand and shook it. "Angie. Angie Harmon. You Starfleet too?"

Nodding her head, T'Pren answered in the affirmative, "Weapons and tactical officer—*Aeolia*. You?"

"Helm. *Bellerophon*."

"Small universe." T'Pren chuckled, her snicker turning into full blown laughter on hearing her new friend's jibe.

"Or universes." Angie quipped, hiding her true emotions behind her laughter.

"That's right!" T'Pren recalled, "Your ship came from a different universe along with the *Belladonna*!"

"Yep." Angie nodded, a dark look briefly crossing her face before it quickly disappeared, replaced by her usual cheerful expression.

"Sounds like there's a story there." T'Pren commented in a gently probing tone.

"There is." Angie nodded, "If it's okay with you though, I really don't want to talk about it."

"Same sorta situation I'm dealing with more or less." T'Pren nodded in understanding. "No worries."

"Thanks." Angie smiled back, "I'm not in the mood for any deep conversations right now anyway. I just wanna sit back and enjoy people watching."

T'Pren agreed. "Sounds like a plan. I kinda feel the same right now."

Her smile now warmer, Angie motioned for Belen to refill their drinks, "So, you wanna people watch together?"

"Sure." T'Pren grinned back as she held out her glass to the Ferengi bartender, "Keep 'em comin' Belen!"

"Only if you promise to sing later." Belen laughed as he refilled the two ladies' drinks.

"It's a deal."

## *Eliza and Zsa-Zsa*

“Looks like everyone’s having a good time *dragam*.” Zsa-Zsa remarked to her dusky-skinned lover as the pair took their seats in a corner booth.

“Yeah.” Eliza grinned, snuggling up to her Hungarian lover. “You smell nice. Is that the perfume I got for you for your birthday?”

“*Igen*.” Zsa-Zsa responded, gently stroking her lover’s arm as their waitress, an attractive dark-haired Romulan woman, brought their drinks to the table. Picking up her champagne flute, the Hungarian starship captain took a sip, “Mmmm...Belen remembered...Krystal. How’s your rum, *szereto*?”

“Very good.” Eliza responded, her Caribbean accent adding to her alluring sensuality. “So...are we still going to the holosuite after dinner?”

“Oh yes.” Zsa-Zsa purred as the waitress came back with their food. “Don’t worry about the calories, *dragam*. We’re going to burn them all off.”

Giggling, Eliza quipped as she stabbed a piece of meat with her fork, “Whoever Belen assigns to clean up is going to hate us in the morning.”

## **Boris**

Holding up his shot glass, Boris Rodenko muttered a brief toast before gulping down the clear pepper vodka inside, “Here’s to you Morgan, Joseph, Elizaveta, Marge, Ronata, and everyone else. May we meet again someday.”

“Drinking to old friends?”

“Da, Commadore.” Boris sighed, setting the shot glass on the table as Soren motioned for the bartender to refill it. “Good friends.”

“They’re the best kind.” Soren declared as the bartender brought him a slender glass containing akvavit. “Tell me about them?”

Chuckling, Boris took another sip. “Heh. I guess the one you could call my best friend was a fellow Border Service captain. While I commanded the old *Scamp*, he was in charge of the *Bluefin*. Joseph...Joseph Akinola was his name...was an old Nigerian warhorse who rose through the ranks.”

Nodding his head, Soren took a sip of his drink before commenting, “A hard charger like him...I’m surprised he didn’t get a regular Fleet berthing.”

“Oh...he got plenty of offers.” The burly Russian laughed, “And turned down every single one. When Morgan...Admiral Bateson...he commanded the star station we were posted on—Star Station Echo—asked him about it, Joseph told him that he was just an old mustang and he’d gotten everything he wanted. He was happy on that cutter of his. He knew everyone on board and they knew him—just as I did when I commanded the *Scamp*.”

“I envy you both that.” Soren heaved a mournful sigh. “As much as I enjoy commanding a *Connie*, there’s no way that you can remember the names and faces of every single member of the crew.”

“Da.” Boris nodded his head in agreement, “I found that out when I took temporary command of the *Sutherland* and then the *Bellerophon*. There is just no way you can get to know over seven hundred beings.” Changing the subject, Boris inquired, “So...where is Commander Williams?”

Chuckling, Soren, after downing his akvavit and signaling the bartender to refresh both their drinks, answered, “She’s getting ready to give Ajun’s new boyfriend the third degree.”

“Ha!” Boris laughed, “There are benefits to being a parent or older sibling—are there not?”

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## **Belen’s Lounge—Passing on the torch**

“What do you mean you’re leaving us?” Shelana exclaimed as she burst into the bar, “Why?”

“I’m sorry. I’d love to stay with you but...” Belen replied apologetically, his eyes moistening with tears, “...the station’s grown so much in the past few years. Drozana’s no longer just a marginally profitable stopover and repair port. It’s grown into a full-fledged resort and will probably be a gateway port between universes. Just think of the trade and commerce—and latinum—coming in here! I just can’t afford to let Qwix run it on his own anymore.” Belen explained in a rueful tone of voice. “But I don’t want to leave you girls...and Joachim...without someone to look after you. Someone I trust has to be here to tend your bar...cook your meals...take care of you and your guests. So...” The Ferengi merchant grinned as he pushed a seemingly shy young Ferengi forward, “Say hello to Bylo—my nephew from Moogie’s side of the family.”

“Bylo?” Nelia interjected, raising a skeptical eyebrow in response.

“He just graduated Commerce School.” Belen boasted, “First in his class.” The Ferengi merchant, speaking now in a stage whisper, muttered to his old friend, “I paid out enough gold pressed latinum in bribes to make sure he did.”

“I want to get my Trade Pioneer’s license.” The young Ferengi proudly declared.

“Trade Pioneer, Third Level...” Belen whispered to the roguish green Orion sitting at the bar sipping her Antarean sunrise. A pleading quality now in his voice, the Ferengi resort owner begged, “He’s got potential...he’s just a little young...that’s all. And I don’t want him to apprentice himself to someone like Madran or Oglo. Leaving out the fact that they’ll just treat him like an indentured servant, they’re old school Ferengi. Those days—for better or worse—are gone for good. It’s a new universe with new rules. We Ferengi have to adapt and part of that adapting is rethinking some of the old ways”

“Okay, Bel. You made your case.” Nelia agreed with a smile, “We’ll take him with us.”

“Thanks.” The Ferengi bartender grinned back as he handed his friend a holosuite key. “Special program.” He whispered conspiratorially, “Give it a try tonight and tell me what you think. If you like it, I’ll put it on the adult only program list and comp you and anyone with you whenever you want to use it.”

“Thanks.” Nelia smirked as she took the key and slipped it between her breasts. “Now...how’s about another Antarean sunrise.”

### *Ashley and Ajun*

“So...” Ajun asked as she modeled her new red Starfleet miniskirt, “What do you think?”

“Looking good, baby Sis.” Ashley grinned. Then, her smile vanishing as quickly as it appeared, the former Gunnery Chief admonished, “Don’t think for a moment that Soren, Jeff, or I are going to cut you any slack young lady. You are going to work your ass off. Not only are we going to expect you to perform your shipboard duties, you’re also going to have to study for your regular school classes and pass your finals.” Her face and voice now reflecting concern, Ashley asked, “Are you sure you’re up for it? There’s no shame in saying that you’d rather wait for a year and get through school first.”

Her former joyful mood now replaced by a more serious demeanor, the young Bajoran teen replied, “I’m sure, Ash. I don’t expect anyone to cut me any breaks. I know it’s going to be tough, and I’m ready. All I want is a chance to show all of you that I am.”

Responding with a warm smile, Ashley promised, “You’ll get that chance.” Changing the subject, she teased, “So...Alic, Huh?”

“What do you mean, Alic, Huh?” Ajun retorted, her cheeks reddening slightly at the mention of the teenage Betazoid boy in her class.

“A little bird told me that he’s taking you to the holosuite tonight.”

“That little bird wouldn’t happen to be named Belen, would he?” Ajun quipped as her blush deepened.

“I’m not a stool pigeon.” Ashley joked, “So...what’s the program?”

“Don’t worry, Ash. It’s one of the safe ones—roller-skating on old Earth back in the 1950s.” Taking out a pink and white poodle skirt from her closet, the young Bajoran woman held it up, “See...all good.”

“Just make sure that part of the program doesn’t include the two of you in the back seat of a ’55 Chevy.” Ashley half-teased. “Okay...go ahead...have a good time. But get back at a reasonable hour. We’re shipping out tomorrow.”

“Aye, Aye, Lieutenant Commander.” Ajun replied with a mock salute and a smile as she went back into her room to change, “You and Soren have a good time too.”

### *Dixie and Zara—Edna’s Diner, Drozana Station*

Dixie stammered as a human waitress arrived with their orders, “Are we okay?”

“Of course we are.” Zara replied as the waitress set down a food tube for the quarian and a cheeseburger with fries and a beer for her human friend. “Whatever gave you the idea that we weren’t?”

“Well...” Dixie apologetically replied, “I did kinda brush you off and I wasn’t very nice about it.”

“You weren’t yourself.” Zara interrupted. “You were still grieving for your brother. You were angry and hurt. I wasn’t mad at you then and I’m not mad at you now. You’re my friend.” The quarian exclaimed, “And that’s the only thing that matters. Right?”

“Right!” Dixie smiled before biting into her burger. “Damn!” The Alabama-born engineer exclaimed, “Ah think that’s the best cheeseburger Ah ever had!”

“Better than *Dino’s*?” Zara joked.

“Pretty damn close!” Dixie drawled with a big smile on her face before taking another bite of her cheeseburger. “Ah mean...Dino’s fries are the best...but this cheeseburger...it’s to die for.”

“Well I’ll take that, young lady.” Edna said with a big smile on her face as she refilled the southern belle’s iced sweet tea. “Ya’ll ready for dessert.”

“Commander Williams said that I should try the blueberry pie with vanilla ice cream.” Dixie responded as she dipped the last of her fries in ketchup before devouring it.

“One blueberry pie with ice cream coming up.” The elderly diner owner affirmed. Turning her attention to her quarian customer, the matronly lady remarked apologetically, “I’m sorry, Miss, I don’t have much in the way of quarian desserts, but I was able to cobble up a dextro-based substitute for my blueberry pie. It’s been tested and is safe for quarians and turians.”

“Thank you.” Zara politely replied, “I’ll give it a try.”

“Great.” Edna grinned, “I’ll be back in a minute with your desserts.”

“So...what are you doing now?” Zara asked as Edna arrived with Dixie’s pie and her dessert tube.

“Well...” The Alabama born blonde replied with a smile, “Me and Edi got a temporary commissions in Starfleet and they’re assigning us to the *Spoiled Princess* to help out in engineering and sciences. What about you?”

“I’m staying here.” The quarian astrophysicist replied, “At least for now. Admiral Kererek asked if I would stay and help the science teams here and I’m helping Doctor N’Della and the medical staff.”

“They’re not turning you into a guinea pig—are they?” Dixie asked in a half-joking manner, her facial expression expressing concern for her friend.

“Oh no!” Zara laughed, “Nothing like that. There’s nothing invasive going on if that’s what’s worrying you. It’s just that they’re not familiar with dextro-based species in this universe and they’re curious. Also, Dr. N’Della has some ideas that might help my people deal with our immunity issues.”

“I’m betting you’d like to get out of that suit.” Dixie chuckled.

“Oh yes!” Zara responded with a sigh. “To be able to actually touch something with my fingers...to smell with my nose.”

“I hope they find a way for you to do that.” Dixie declared in a low earnest tone as the duo finished their meal. Getting up from her chair, the blonde engineer smiled warmly at her quarian friend, “I gotta go now an’ get ready. Gonna get real busy soon.”

“That’s right. Today’s the big day. The Taskforce is crossing over.” Zara smiled back, “Give my regards to our friends on the other side.”

“Will do!” Dixie promised, adding with a big grin on her face, “I’m glad we got a chance to get together—an’ I’m glad to see you again. I missed you.”

“I missed you too.” Zara replied, giving her best friend a quick hug, “Take care of yourself.”

## Epilogue: A New Adventure Begins

### Chapter Summary

The Trans-Universal Taskforce begins its mission.

### Chapter Notes

Our next story in the series will focus on the Gallena and its crew as the meeting between the two universes draws nigh

#### ***Coronado System—Joint Task Force (USS Valley Forge, USS Spoiled Princess, USS Aeolia, RRW D’ressa, IKS Klothos)***

“All ships report ready, Commodore.” The *Valley Forge* communications officer, a Caitan female, reported.

“Sciences?”

“Ready when you are, Sir.” Talana responded.

“Tactical?”

“Just give the word, Commodore.” Lieutenant Commander Jeff Maxwell responded.

“Engineering.”

“Ready when you are, Sir.” Stavik, the Tellarite chief engineer, declared from his station.

“Ready, Ash?” Soren whispered to the raven-haired woman standing beside him wearing a Starfleet gold miniskirt with Lieutenant Commander’s braid on her sleeve and her hair done up in a beehive.

“Ready as I’ll ever be.” The former Alliance marine responded as she forced down the butterflies in her stomach.

Taking a deep breath, the Commodore issued his orders. “Activate the portal generators. It’s time for us to see what’s on the other side.”

#### ***IKS Klothos***

“Portal has opened, Captain, and the order has been given to enter.”

“Ambassador?” Captain Korath turned his head to the distinguished Klingon diplomat standing next to his chair.

“It is your ship, Captain.” Ambassador Worf responded in a deep, baritone voice, “The glory is yours.”

“Engage.” The human-augment Klingon captain ordered, “Warp Two.”

#### ***USS Belladonna***

“We’re on the move, Captain.” Eliza Flores announced to her commanding officer.

“Very good, *dragam*.” Zsa-Zsa responded with a smirk, “A new universe awaits us. Let’s see what sort of trouble we can get into, dahlings. Warp Factor Two...Now.”

#### ***USS Bellerophon***

“Put us in formation with the rest of the fleet and engage warp on my order Ms. Harmon.” Captain Rodenko ordered, his baritone Russian accented voice resounding throughout the bridge.

“Aye, Sir.” The platinum-blond lieutenant acknowledged, her fingers nimbly executing the captain’s command.

“Guess we’re on our way to another universe, Ang.” Lieutenant Conti, sitting in the chair next to Angie quipped.

“Guess so.” Angie replied with a smirk. Lowering her voice, she muttered to herself, “Here we go again. Time for another great adventure, Dad. I wish you could be here with me.”

### ***RRW D'ressa***

"The portal is open, Commander, and the order given to proceed."

"Very well." Commander Kaval inclined his head as he spoke to his executive officer, "Signal that we are underway. Warp factor two. It is time to bring our long lost sister home."

### ***USS Aeolia***

"Take us in Mr. Shalev." Captain Hobson ordered on receipt of the command to proceed. "Warp Two."

### ***USS Spoiled Princess***

"I wish Ash were here." Shelana grumbled from her position at the helm of the ship.

"I do too." Nelia, sitting at the command chair, responded with a sigh, "Even though she's assigned to the *Valley Forge* now, she's still part of our family."

"I have a feeling we'll still be seeing a lot of her." Twesata quipped, "After all, she's still got most of her stuff in her room."

"We just got the order to go in." Joachim announced from the tactical station.

"Twes..."

"We're ready, Nel." The Betazoid science officer replied. "Rana's in sickbay and Candy's at her station."

"All-righty then." Nelia grinned, "Atris...bring us in...Warp Two. Let's have some fun."

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