

# Hidden Frontier

## A Star Trek Fan Film Series

Book 1: Enemy Unknown  
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A lone starship stands between a new threat and the destruction of the Federation!

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Part 1

## Chapter I

Captain Ian Quincy Knapp, of the USS *Devonshire*, stared out over his crew; his eyes fixed on his ship's viewscreen. "*This is it,*" he thought to himself, as he tugged on his uniform tunic. "*This is where I finally get my payback from these sons of bitches!*"

"Helm, what's our status and position?" Knapp called out to the helm officer, Ensign Mark Abney.

Abney turned to his CO, brown hair rustling from the sudden shift, "We're at three-quarter's impulse power, in a diamond slot formation with the flight group. The *Devonshire* is taking the lead, and we're coming up on the Dominion fleet."

"Tactical Analysis, Mister Brickey?" Knapp asked, as he shifted to face his tactical officer, Lieutenant Phillip Brickey.

"We outgun them sir, and we outnumber them two to one. There are mostly reserve ships in the rear flanks, few heavy gun emplacements on the dreadnoughts; there's virtually nothing up front. This is not the main force." Brickey replied, his eyes focused on the job.

"Sir, we've got an incoming transmission. Admiral Ross on subspace channel Four-Oh-Seven." Ensign Helen Kim said, her brow furrowed in worried concentration, as she tapped controls and managed the power systems and resource distribution aboard the ship.

"Onscreen, Mister Kim." Knapp said.

The viewscreen image shifted from a starfield littered with ships of every active class and configuration to the war wearied, but bright-eyed Admiral William Ross, aboard his flagship, the USS *Dauntless*.

"All ships, this is Admiral Ross. Prepare to engage the Dominion. For all those who may need a reminder..." Knapp winced at that, Ross was referring to him. Knapp had only recently had his commission returned to him, and Ross didn't trust that Knapp could repress the urge to blow up every Dominion ship in sight, regardless of the cost. "This is a mission to force a quick surrender of the enemy fleet, and move on towards Cardassia Prime, not to obliterate them. We must move through this line quickly! As usual, I will lead the attack and take Alpha group. Captain Benjamin Sisko of the *Defiant* will take Beta Group, General Martok will be leading Delta Group and the Klingon ships, and Captain Ian Knapp of the *Devonshire* will be leading the containment teams in Gamma Group. Good luck ladies and gentlemen. *Dauntless* out."

"Red Alert! All hands report to battle stations! I repeat, all hands to battle stations, this is not a drill." Knapp said, and instantly, the crew sprung into action. Moments after he called for them, the extra crew reported to stations, the bridge lighting had dimmed, and the alert klaxons blared in the hallways, notifying the crew of the change in status.

"Helm, ahead full impulse, attack pattern Knapp-2-7-Alpha. Brickey, target the battle group leaders, and open fire!"

"Aye, sir!" replied both officers, as they carried out his instructions.

The *Devonshire* surged forward, unleashing the power of her freshly charged phaser banks. Knapp watched in satisfaction, as his opening target began to falter and drift under the intense barrage.

"Inbound weapons fire!" Kim called out, as she gripped her station's edges, and everyone else braced themselves. Moments later, the ship jolted slightly under the impact of the return fire.

"Report!" Knapp called out to Brickey.

"Forward shields are holding at 92% strength, no other damage. It looks like they're not going down without a fight, sir."

"I wouldn't expect anything less, Lieutenant. Those bastards killed my brother, remember? I owe them a little payback, and I'm more than happy to provide the fight they want so badly."

Knapp's first officer, Lieutenant Commander Amelia Rodriguez, leaned in towards the captain, her emerald green eyes probing for any visible signs of instability, "Sir, I remind the captain that this is a containment mission. We're here to force surrender, not to get-

Knapp cut her off, his words quiet and angry, "I am aware of my mission, Commander!" Stepping back the edge in his voice, and then leaning back into his chair, he quipped, "I just happen to enjoy my assignment." Turning his eyes back forward, he continued giving orders.

Spotting a Cardassian battle cruiser, he pointed at it, and said, "Abney, keep on that one's aft quarter. Mister Brickey, let's give them a bit of incentive to surrender. Clear us a path."

“Aye, Captain. Launching Quantum Torpedoes.” Brickey tapped his console, and the *Devonshire* began to rip and claw her way through the enemy lines. Hungrily, her phasers reached out and blew the tail of a Galor-Class ship in half, sending its Cardassian occupants reeling from the blow. As it spun out of control, it belched plasma and atmosphere from the gaping hole left behind. Two Dominion attack cruisers fired at *Devonshire* in retaliation, but to no avail. The USS *Rutledge* swept in, weapons blazing, turning both enemy ships into cinder clouds. Performing a victory roll, she let loose with her torpedo launcher clusters, the missiles biting into the unprotected hull of a Dominion dreadnought. Explosions ripped through from under the surface of the hull, as fires and plasma energy raked over the nacelles, consuming the material. The ship’s lighting died, as it drifted helplessly into the path of a Cardassian fighter group, destroying the entire group on impact.

“Commander Rodriguez! We’re receiving new mission orders! I’ve relayed them to your station, sir.” Kim said, a blur of motion at her post.

“Rodriguez looked at the armrest console between her chair and Knapp’s. “Sir, Admiral Ross has ordered us to pursue two command ships that have broken free from the main group. They’re attempting to make an escape at warp. It looks like they may be making a run for the McCallister C-5 Nebula.”

“Helm, set an intercept course at maximum warp! Mister Kim, have the *Rutledge* and *Tian An Men* follow us.”

“Aye, sir. *Rutledge* and *Tian An Men* responding now and falling in beside us, they’re ready.”

“Engage!” The trio of Federation ships leaped to warp, taking off in hot pursuit of the escaping ships.

Shortly after they had started, the Dominion ships arrived at the nebula, and dropped to impulse. Hot on their heels, Knapp’s squad appeared, as they dropped out of warp moments later.

“Sensors picking up a Meklar-Class ship and a dreadnought, sir.” Brickey said, readying himself for continued battle.

“Open a channel, Ensign” Knapp said to Kim, and she nodded as she complied. “This is Captain Knapp of the *Devonshire*. Stand down immediately and prepare to be boarded!”

"No response, sir. They're blocking our comm signal."

"Well, I guess we'll just have to be insistent that they talk. Mister Brickey, fire a warning shot."  
Knapp said

"Aye, sir." Brickey said, and the crew watched as a lance of phaser fire reached out and grazed the Heavy dreadnought; its shields flared up in protest. They waited for a moment.

"There's no change in either vessel, Captain. They'll enter the nebula in thirty seconds!"  
Rodriguez said.

"Apparently they didn't take the hint, Commander. Knapp to all ships! Shoot to disable, open fire!" The three Federation ships belched phaser fire and photon torpedoes at their foes. Seeming to shrug it off easily, the enemy ships returned fire, striking out against the *Rutledge* and *Tian An Men*, as they banked in opposite directions, parting ways as they neared the nebula.

"They're splitting up, sir!" Kim called out.

"Send the *Rutledge* after the Cardassians. Helm, stick with the dreadnought. All ships, fire at will!"

Flashes of phaser fire erupted from *Tian An Men's* weapons arrays, as it tried to beat down the dreadnought's shields. The dreadnought retaliated by blowing the *Tian An Men* out of the sky.

"They've destroyed the *Tian An Men*!" Brickey blurted out, as the expanding fireball of what was once that ship filled the screen.

"Continue firing! Phasers, maximum power, full spread, now!" Knapp shouted, infuriated. The *Devonshire* hammered on the dreadnought's shields mercilessly, desperately trying to overpower them. The Dominion ship then cut loose with her phased polaron disrupters, batting *Devonshire* away as though she were a fly. She tumbled helplessly along her X-axis in a flat spin.

Shouts of pain and surprise were heard all over the bridge, as crew was tossed from their stations, consoles exploded, and fires grew up from the sparks being thrown everywhere. Knapp struggled to his feet, and looked around. Abney sat, slumped over his console, unconscious at best. Ensign Kim, she wasn't so lucky. Bodily thrown over her station's front console, she now

lay on the floor, her neck tilted at an impossible angle, glazed eyes staring lifelessly. The viewscreen was a tumbling, spinning scene of stars, wildly out of control.

Knapp acted quickly. "Medics to the bridge! Commander Rodriguez, take the helm, get us out of this spin!" he shouted over the din and noises of the fire suppression systems.

"Aye, Captain," she said, as she stepped over to Abney's console, fighting to remain standing, and she began to input commands. The system beeped negatively at her. "Sir, main helm control is off-line, I can't get the impulse engines to respond! I'm accessing backups..." She began typing in commands on the other side of the console, careful not to move Abney. The screen's image spun slower and slower, and then stopped moving altogether. "Sir, I've stopped the spin, we're now at station keeping."

"Excellent work, Mister Rodriguez. Brickey, do we still have a sensor lock?" Knapp asked, hopeful.

"Negative, sir. Tactical sensor palettes are off-line." Brickey said, with a deep frown.

"Blast!" Knapp said. "Damage report!"

"We've got minor hull damage, decks 4 through 8, the EPS relays near the area have fused. Nothing major, we can fix that as we go." Rodriguez said, "Here's the kicker. The main deflector, comm system, and impulse reactors are off-line. We're not going anywhere," she said, disgusted.

"Damn! What about the *Rutledge*? How is she faring?"

"They followed the Cardassians farther into the nebula. I've lost contact with them, sir."

## Chapter II

*Combat log, stardate 54398.2. The Devonshire's crew has nearly finished repairs, and is ready to continue our mission. I fear that I've lost the Rutledge to the combined forces of the two enemy ships hidden within the nebula we must now delve into.*

"Sir, we've managed to restore main power to full operation. Most of our primary systems are online, and fully functional. We're still working on the comm blackout, sir, it should be online within two minutes, though." Engineers mate Toby Witczak said, standing at attention near the main status console.

"Excellent work, Ensign. What caused the failure? Our shields took the blow just fine, didn't they?" Knapp asked.

"It was a lucky shot, sir. They caught us while we were rotating shield harmonics. Most of the blast was deflected, but the residuals knocked out our power grid momentarily."

"Very good, Mister Witczak . Dismissed." Knapp said, turning to examine the status console.

"Aye, sir." Witczak moved towards the waiting turbolift.

"Mister Rodriguez, take us into the nebula, best possible speed. Track down the dreadnought."

"Yes, sir. Locking on to the dreadnought's ion trail." Rodriguez said, setting the new course, and engaging it.

Knapp looked over his crew, as the medical team, led by his Tellarite CMO, Lieutenant Commander Henglaar, worked diligently over Abney, Kim and Brickey. He was standing patiently as a nurse scanned him for injuries. "How are they, doc?"

Henglaar snorted. "Well, Lieutenant Brickey has a mild laceration, and some bruising, he'll be fine. I've already patched him up. Mister Abney has first and second degree plasma burns on his face and torso, a dislocated shoulder, and broken wrists, but he'll live. I'm transporting him to sickbay now. Ensign Kim is dead, Ian. She broke her neck when she was thrown over the console. Thankfully, it was quick."

"Damn!" Knapp slammed his hands on the deck railing. "There are too many kids going home in a box thanks to this damned war! It seems like I'm using more torpedo casings to honor our dead than to prevent them from being that way!"

"Captain, you're doing your best, with everything you have. We've both lost a lot of people to this war. Friends, family members, children... ...I lost my bond-mate last year, remember? All we can do is press on. In fact, it's all I can do to make sure I remember these kids. As far as some are concerned, Kim's just another name and rank on the casualty list I send to Starfleet Command every day."

"Hopefully, it'll all be over soon. I look to the day when the Dominion is out of my hair once and for all."

Henglaar smiled, "You and me both, Captain."

"Captain," Rodriguez said over her shoulder, "The ion trail ends just up ahead."

"So soon?" Knapp replied, puzzled. "On screen." The viewer snapped on, and Knapp nearly fell over. The dreadnought he had just battled with was now burning, twisted wreckage, dead in space.

"The dreadnought is completely destroyed!" Brickey blurted out before he could catch himself.

"I can see that, Lieutenant. Are there any life signs?" Knapp asked.

"Negative, sir. Not even a blip."

"Scan the wreckage thoroughly, then move on towards the *Rutledge*." Knapp said, unsure as to how to feel.

The *Devonshire* stopped briefly to scan the crumpled, pitted and scarred mass, then pushed on towards the *Rutledge* and her quarry. The trip took five, maybe ten minutes, when...

"Captain, I'm picking up the *Rutledge*, but the Cardassian ship is nowhere within sensor range. However, there's a debris cloud of sufficient mass to be the warship in the *Rutledge's* vicinity." Rodriguez said, as she read from her console.

"On screen, Commander." The viewscreen camera panned right to reveal the Rutledge and the remains of the Meklar-class ship.

"The Cardassian ship was destroyed in the same manner as the dreadnought, sir. The Rutledge herself is fully operational, but she's running with her shields down." Brickey said.

"Could the Rutledge have destroyed both ships, Captain?" Rodriguez asked.

"Not likely, Commander. The Rutledge is a frigate. She doesn't have the level of firepower required to dispatch both vessels." Knapp said, standing to his feet. "Open a channel, Lieutenant."

"Go ahead, sir."

"This is the Devonshire calling USS Rutledge. Do you require any assistance?" Knapp waited, and looked to Brickey. He shook his head, no one had responded. Knapp tried again. "This is Captain Ian Knapp, calling USS Rutledge, please respond."

"Captain, there's no one on the Rutledge capable of answering our hail. I'm not detecting anyone on the bridge. In fact, I'm only detecting one possible life sign. I can't localize it from here, there's too much interference from the nebula." Brickey said.

"Commander Rodriguez, assemble an away mission. I want to know why a ship with no damage and a crew of 208 is down to just one possible life sign. Minimum required team, Rodriguez; we're running short right now."

"Aye, Captain. Brickey, you're with me." Looking briefly at the ceiling, she called out, "Rodriguez to Henglaar."

*"This had better be important, bridge,"* Henglaar replied, his voice tinny over the intercom system.

"Report to transporter room two with an away mission med kit, on the double!"

*"I'm on my way, Henglaar out."*

Rodriguez and Brickey headed towards the turbolift, as Ensign Witczak and Crewman Anderson stepped out of the turbolift to replace them at their consoles.

“Deck Five,” Rodriguez said to the waiting computer, and the lift doors closed. With a near imperceptible drop, the lift car headed into the bowels of the ship.

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Rodriguez stepped into the away team supply closet across from the transporter room. She selected a Type-II phaser and holster from one of the racks, clipping it to her waist, as she selected a modified Type-I “cricket” made specifically for the doctor’s hand. Brickey checked the charge level on his phaser, and grabbed a tricorder from another rack. Stepping back into the corridor, they met with the doctor just outside the transporter room doors, and she gave them both a quick mission briefing.

“OK, you two, here’s the situation. The captain has ordered us to investigate the apparent disappearance of at least 200 Starfleet personnel. I want us to stick together, and keep an eye out for anything that might be helpful in solving this mystery. Let’s move.”

The trio walked into the transporter room, and onto the waiting pads, Rodriguez taking the foremost pad, Henglaar to her left, Brickey to her right, on the pads behind her. She lifted her left hand, holding Henglaar’s phaser, and held it in front of him. Snorting in disdain, he took it from her, muttering under his breath, something like “I’m here to save lives, not take them...” Rodriguez and Brickey unholstered their phasers, and stood ready.

“I have a set of beam-in coordinates, Commander. Whenever you’re ready.” Crewman Jellison said, working the transporter console.

“Energize.” And with that, blue-white columns of light enshrouded Brickey, Henglaar, and Rodriguez, and they faded out of sight.

## Chapter 3

*\* Ethereal, we have detected a new vessel near our position. The life forms aboard are compatible with your energy needs. \**

*\* Acquire them, minion. Use whatever means necessary. \**

*\* Yes, master. \**

---

The team from the Devonshire rematerialized aboard the Rutledge's auxiliary bridge and started looking around. The room was bathed in the deep cranberries and subtle whites of Red Alert.

"Computer, stand down Red Alert. Override command protocols, authorization Rodriguez-Alpha-Tango-7-4-9."

The computer beeped in response, and said in "her" sanitized, scrubbed voice, "*Acknowledged. Command codes accepted.*" The lighting shifted back to the normal ship's day settings, and most of the consoles in the room powered down completely, or reverted to passive standby. Rodriguez tapped her comm badge, as Henglaar and Brickey each moved to an active console.

"Rodriguez to *Devonshire*."

*"Devonshire here, Commander, go ahead."*

"Captain, we're aboard the Rutledge, on the auxiliary bridge. Doctor Henglaar and Lieutenant Brickey are looking for our mystery life form. The stations here appear to be abandoned outright, sir. The consoles were still active and awaiting input, but the conn and ops stations have just been pushed aside, like a duty shift change had started, but never finished. Once we've got a lock on the life sign, we'll proceed to its location and report."

*"Understood, Commander. Be careful, Rodriguez. Devonshire out."*

"Commander, come take a look at this." Henglaar said over his shoulder, pointing at the display screen on the station he was using. As she walked over, he continued, "I think we've found our mystery life form. Deck 14, Main Engineering. One life sign, with a Betazed signature. I cross checked the database, and there's only one Betazoid officer registered as a crewmember."

Henglaar tapped more controls, and a photo appeared next to the map of the area where the life sign was aboard the ship. "Lieutenant Myra Elbrey, a tactical psychologist."

"Looks like we solved one mystery. OK, let's get to engineering," Rodriguez said, leading the way to the turbolift. Barely inside the freshly opened doors, she called out, "Main Engineering." The doors snapped shut, and the lift sped off to its destination.

---

"Captain, I've completed my analysis of the Cardassian wreckage. I think you should take a look at this sir." Witczak said, tapping in instructions on his console.

"What is it, Ensign?" Knapp asked, as he walked over to the tactical/engineering station.

"Look at these energy signatures, sir. The computer can't identify them, and I've never seen them before either. In fact, I almost didn't detect them. I had to scan the upper theta bands, nearly at quantum resolution, before they even showed up. Do you recognize them, sir?"

Knapp looked at the sensor readouts, tapping in enhancement algorithms, and peering at the results. "No, Ensign, I haven't. The closest thing I can compare it to is vague EM radiation, almost like a transmission.... Good work, Mister Witczak. Start looking for clues on the Rutledge."

---

The turbolift doors parted, offloading its passengers out into the main corridor of deck 14. Rodriguez and her team fanned out; their phasers drawn and tricorders open as they approached Engineering, all of them scanning for the Betazed.

"Commander, Doctor, over here!" Brickey called out. He was near the chief engineering officer's office, and his tricorder had detected a life sign behind the locked door.

Raising his phaser, he reached for the door panel, and pressed the actuator. The door slid open, revealing a brown-haired Betazed female bearing a gold undershirt on her uniform. She was clutching a hand phaser in a death grip as she pointed it at the away team, a mixture of terror and anger in her eyes.

"Don't move! I'll shoot, I swear by the Holy Rings..!" The woman shouted.

“Woah! Easy there, Lieutenant. We’re friends! I’m Lieutenant Commander Amelia Rodriguez; we’re from the *Devonshire*. Are you OK, Mister Elbrey?” Rodriguez held her hands up in an effort to convince the officer of the truthfulness of her words.

The young woman’s face softened as she lowered her phaser. “I’m... ..I’m fine, sir. You said you were from the *Devonshire*?”

“Yes. What happened here? Did the Cardassians board your ship?” Rodriguez asked.

“No, sir. Nothing so benign. You see, the Cardassians were surrendering to us and we had just begun boarding their ship to secure it when an unidentified ship approached us. The Cardassians saw them, and raised their shields, moving into a defensive posture. But before we could do the same, an intense sonic barrage overwhelmed the crew. Immediately after that, they were all taken over by an incredibly powerful psionic force, unlike anything I’ve ever encountered. I had barely enough strength to shield myself from their awareness. I took a phaser, and headed to engineering, trying to stay out of sight. I did my best to lock out the computer cores, but as you can understand, I’m no computer technician.”

“Brickey, get on uploading the sensor logs to the *Devonshire*.” Rodriguez said. Brickey nodded, and moved towards the central control board, and began the uplink requests.

Elbrey continued, “The Cardassians apparently had a firefight with the aliens, because the aliens had already destroyed their ship by the time I got to Engineering.”

“OK, Lieutenant. What happened to the remaining crew then? Where are they?”

“We were boarded by the aliens. The crew never stood a chance. Most of them didn’t even fight; their minds had been forced into obedience to the beings. The ones who did fight, Vulcans mostly, were quickly stunned, and everyone was beamed away. I don’t even know why they attacked us. Because I mentally shielded myself, I couldn’t get a clear read on their minds. I’m not even sure if they’re aware of what they want with the crew either.

---

“Captain! Inbound bogey, bearing 175 mark 8!”

“Identify them Mister Witczak !” Knapp said, standing to his feet from his command chair.

"There aren't any matches in the database, sir. We've never encountered them before. But whoever they are, their ship makes ours look like a shuttle!"

"Go to Yellow Alert, Ensign." Knapp said, then waited a beat before saying, "Knapp to away team."

*"Rodriguez here, sir. Go ahead."*

"Stand by for transport, we're getting out of here!"

---

"Understood, sir. Standby." Rodriguez said, turning to Brickey. "Let's move, Brickey."

"Almost there, sir. Just give me two minutes to finish the data upload." Brickey said, calmly uploading information from the sensor logs to the Devonshire.

"Save it for later, Brickey. The captain's orders are to standby for immediate beam out. Pack it up now, Lieutenant." Rodriguez said.

"Aye, sir." Brickey said, terminating the commlink to Devonshire's computer core and regrouping with the others.

---

*"Where the hell is that away team?"* Knapp thought, as he paced back and forth in front of the command dais.

"Sir, the alien vessel is slowing. They're holding position 3000 meters off of our aft quarter."

"On screen, Ensign." Knapp said. The viewscreen shifted to display the image directly behind Devonshire. A massive ship, shaped like a miniature Spacedock, loomed ominously in the background, red and white energies cycling all over it in a hypnotic dance of lights and shadows.

"Hail them," Knapp said, and Witczak opened a channel. "This is Captain Ian Knapp of the Federation starship Devonshire. Please identify yourselves." Knapp waited a moment, then asked, "Any response?"

"No sir, I... ..Wait a second... ..It looks like they've translated our lingacode, they're hailing us."

“On screen, Ensign” Knapp responded, turning to face the viewer.

---

“Sir, Devonshire’s hailing us over the Rutledge’s comm system.” Brickey said, as he read the console, puzzled.

“Why would they do that? Our comm badges are working just fine...” Henglaar said.

“I don’t know. Perhaps the comm badges are being jammed, but there’s enough strength in the main system aboard Rutledge? On speakers, Brickey.”

“No, wait! It could be...” Elbrey started to say, but it was too late, Brickey had already opened the channel. An ear-piercing shriek emanated from the speakers, forcing the group to hold their ears in agony. The effect was so loud that Brickey, Henglaar and Rodriguez were brought to their knees. Elbrey shouted over the din, both vocally and in her mind as she moved towards the “pool table”, trying to cut off the comm. system.

*\* Lock onto the sound of my voice! Hear only me! Don’t let them take over! \**

Rodriguez and Brickey fought and struggled to regain their feet, while Henglaar simply collapsed, his superior hearing causing him even more pain than them. The sound stopped, almost as suddenly as it had begun. The group slowly got up, Brickey and Rodriguez on one side of the master status console, Henglaar and Elbrey on the other, and there was a fifth now. A diminutive being, dressed only in a brown cloak, was scanning Brickey and Rodriguez! Brickey and Rodriguez stared blankly ahead, their bodies rigid.

“Commander! Mister Brickey! Look out!” Henglaar shouted, still on his knees, raising his phaser. Elbrey raised hers too, as they and the alien faced each other in a standoff.

Brickey turned to look at Elbrey and Henglaar as he raised his own phaser. “Stand down, sirs,” he said, aiming at them. “Put down your weapons!”

“What the hell are you doing, Brickey!” Henglaar said, “Have you lost your... never mind, I’m guessing you have,” he finished, and adjusted his phaser to heavy stun and pressed down on the trigger. A red-orange beam, crackling with energy, shot out from the weapon’s emitter, lancing

right through the alien and Brickey as they and Rodriguez were already fading from sight, captured by the alien's transporter beam.

"Damn!" Henglaar said, holding his head with one hand, and struggling to his feet. Elbrey reached down and helped him up.

"You lasted longer than anyone I know. Certainly longer than any human could." Elbrey said, clearly impressed.

"I guess what they say about my people is true, Lieutenant. The only way to get a new thought into a Tellarite's brain is with a drill!" Henglaar groaned as he rubbed his temples, "I really wish they would've sharpened the bit first."

Elbrey smiled tightly, then said, "I think we'd better check on your ship, doctor."

"I think you're right." Henglaar tapped his commbadge, and it chirped in response. "Henglaar to Devonshire." Puzzled by the lack of a response, he tried again. "Henglaar to Devonshire, please respond." Nothing.

Elbrey accessed the sensors. "Doctor, they've been boarded. It looks like they didn't get their shields up in time."

Henglaar thought for a second. "OK Elbrey, what can we do?"

"Well, Doctor, we should be able to break the aliens' psionic control by raising the shields aboard the Devonshire. I think that's why they destroyed the Cardassian ship. For some reason, the shields block their control over a victim."

"OK, Lieutenant, let's get to a transporter room. Where is one?"

"Deck Eight, Section 32."

"All right, then, let's move." Henglaar and Elbrey ran out of engineering.

---

\* *Report, Minion.* \*

*\* I captured two of them for your purposes, Ethereal, but two of them did not fall under your control. \**

*\* Unacceptable! We need all of their energy! Return to the vessel immediately! \**

*\* My liege, they've already transferred to the other ship! \**

*\* Then find them! They can defend their companions! Do not fail me! \**

*\* Yes, Ethereal! \**

---

Henglaar and Elbrey materialized in the empty transporter room aboard the Devonshire, and the doctor immediately moved towards the operator's console. Scanning the ship as Elbrey looked on from the pad, he said, "The ship is crawling with those little beasties! We'll have to beam into the conference room, then storm the bridge from there."

"What about accessing the shields from here?" Elbrey asked.

"Not possible. The Bridge and Engineering are the only locations that the shields can be accessed," Henglaar said, "Set your phaser to stun. We may have to fire on our own people." Henglaar said, as he inputted coordinates into the console, and activated it. The whine of the transporter sequence began sounding.

"What if they attack again? You may not be powerful enough to resist them twice!" Elbrey said.

"Well then," Henglaar said dryly, as he stepped up onto the transporter pad, "You'll just have to shoot me, Lieutenant." Both officers vanished, as the transporter caught them up.

---

Both sets of conference room doors snapped open, as Henglaar and Elbrey snuck onto the bridge, phasers drawn. Only Knapp and Witczak remained on the bridge, blissfully unaware of what was going on. Aiming at the alien near the main status console, Elbrey fired, the blast hitting the being square in the torso. Pushed back briefly, the alien turned around, and returned fire. Elbrey dived for cover, the blast narrowly missing her as she landed behind the science console.

"It looks like they have some sort of bio-mechanical armor! I hit it square in the chest, and it didn't even knock him over!" Elbrey said, ducking under the station.

"Let's see what he thinks about the higher power settings!" Henglaar said, from behind the operations station. He fired at a creature near the pilot's console, vaporizing it on impact. "Set your phaser for level 6, Lieutenant! Pick your targets carefully!"

"Aye, sir." Elbrey said, as she got up to return fire. The alien darted for cover, as she laid down fire that chased it all the way to the turbolift alcove before she caught it. Another being fired at her while she wasn't looking, and the console behind her exploded in a shower of sparks, as the bright blue energy beam burned a hole through her. She screamed in pain as she slumped to the deck, clutching her left shoulder.

"Elbrey!" Henglaar said, as he vaporized another alien, this one coming out of the Captain's ready room. He ducked back under the operations console, as the alien that shot Elbrey returned fire. Strangely, an alien scanning Knapp hadn't even bothered to look at the firefight going on all around him.

"I'm all right, sir! We need to get the shields up!" Elbrey said through clenched teeth, fighting the agony.

"Right! Just give me a second on that!" Henglaar snuck a look around the edge of the console between shots meant to hold him down. He squeezed off a shot, hitting the alien more by luck than skill. Rushing to the tactical console, he slapped his hand down on the shield controls. The shield indicator changed from orange to green, and a diagram of the ship showed a blue glow around it, indicating the shields had been raised.

Knapp blinked several times, as he shook his head. "What the hell..." He looked around, and saw the robed being next to him. "Who are you? What do you want?" The alien reached for him, intending to sedate him, and Knapp struggled against him, catching "his" hand, and fighting to prevent him from applying the drug. Elbrey slowly got to her feet, and aimed at the creature, pressing down on her phaser's trigger. The being was bathed in an energy corona as it disappeared into oblivion.

"Nice shooting, Lieutenant..." Knapp said, grateful for the help.

"Elbrey, sir. I'm an officer aboard the Rutledge. The only officer now, really." she replied, still holding her left arm. Henglaar rushed over with his medkit, and scanned her.

"Amazing. The beam cauterized the wound completely; there's no bleeding. It's almost as though the shot wasn't meant to kill you, just derive maximum pain. I'll give you something to take the edge off, and then I'll get you down to sickbay." Henglaar said, applying a hypospray to Elbrey's neck

"Nice toy," Knapp said, commenting on the weaponry. "What happened to us?" he asked.

"The Devonshire fell victim to a psionic attack, sir. The aliens on the other vessel took control of your minds." Elbrey said,

Knapp started to respond, but before he could, the ship jolted violently, tossing everyone back onto the deck. "Helm! Get us out of here!" Knapp said, getting up. "Helm? Where the hell is the helmsman?" he said, looking around the bridge. Most of the crew manning the stations had disappeared.

Henglaar, already on his way to the pilot's station, said, "I did some flying back during my academy days. I'll take the helm."

"How long ago was that, Doc?"

"22 years, 5 months, give or take..." Henglaar said, as he sat at the console, entering his personalization codes, "Why?"

"Just try not to hit anything, OK?" Knapp said, smirking.

"I only hit what I aim for." Henglaar said, entering helm instructions.

"Mister Witczak, take the tactical station. Give us some cover fire. Dispatch security teams to round up our friends! Mister Elbrey, you've got operations. Let's get the hell out of here, maximum impulse!" As they scrambled to the stations, the ship jolted again tossing everyone around.

"Well, sir, I think we've caught at least one break. The aliens aboard aren't capable of mind control. As long as the shields are up, we aren't at risk of another mental takeover."

"I'll take the breaks where I can get them, Mister Elbrey. Send out a distress signal, all frequencies. Inform the fleet of our situation, and prepare the log beacon. Mister Witczak, aft torpedo launchers, fire a full spread."

"Firing, sir." Witczak said, loading the aft torpedo launchers, then launching a volley of quantum torpedoes. They slammed into the alien ship, exploding in large balls of fire, but after the fire dissipated, the ship was still there. "Captain, I just launched the Quantum torpedoes, and it barely made a dent! The nebula gasses appear to be strengthening the ship's armor. It would take a fleet of ships to stop this thing!" The ship jolted again. "Sir, shields are at 38 percent, we can't take this kind of beating for long."

"Captain, we're still inside the cloud. I estimate 12 minutes to the perimeter of the nebula!" Henglaar said, evading to the best of his piloting skills. "Hang on!"

Knapp watched the viewscreen in horror, as the alien ship surged forward, ramming the Rutledge, destroying her on impact, and flying through the debris cloud. Accessing the sensors, he noticed that the ship had taken some damage on impact with the frigate.

"The security teams are having trouble rounding up the intruders, sir!" Elbrey said.

"Then have them blow the little things out the airlocks, Lieutenant. I want this ship secured!" Knapp said, formulating a plan.

"Aye, sir."

The ship jolted once more, this time blowing out stations on the bridge. The Engineering and science stations were a ragged mess of Plexiglas and circuitry, partially blackened.

"Sir! The aft shields are beginning to buckle. I'm re-routing main power to the aft shield grid, but the generator's already overloaded, it won't last too much longer, sir," Elbrey called out in warning.

Knapp sat thinking for a moment. Hopelessly outgunned, his ship could never take out the intruders in a firefight, and by the time reinforcements arrived, they could likely be too late to assist, or even to track the thing down. "Helm, set your new course, bearing 172 mark 0, full impulse turn. We're not running from them anymore."

“Sir?” Witczak said, disbelieving his ears.

Knapp continued, “We don’t stand a chance, Ensign. We’re going to use the *Devonshire* to ram that ship, whoever they are. They’re clearly hostile, and must be stopped. Flood all the remaining energy available to the shield grid.” Knapp looked up to the ceiling briefly, and said, “All hands, this is the captain. Abandon ship, repeat, all hands abandon ship, this is not a drill!” The abandon ship alarm blared in the hallways and cabins, as the crew scrambled to obey the order. Escape pods were filled and launched as quickly as possible.”

Knapp walked over to the Tactical Station, and said, “Computer, this is Captain Ian Knapp. Activate auto-destruct program, authorization Knapp-2-7-Alpha-Omega.”

The computer beeped in response, and awaited Henglaar’s input.

“Computer, this is Lieutenant Commander Henglaar, acting first officer. Confirm Auto-Destruct. Authorization Henglaar-Tango-Delta-4-Niner.”

The computer beeped again, awaiting a third officer’s input.

“Computer, this is Ensign Toby Witczak , assistant chief engineer. Confirm Auto-Destruct. Authorization Witczak -Omega-Pi-7-2-8.”

The computer beeped in response, and said, “*Authorization accepted. Awaiting final instructions to begin auto-destruct sequence.*”

“Computer, this is Captain Knapp. Destruct sequence Omega. Five minutes, silent and blind countdown. Enable.”

“*Warning! Auto-Destruct Omega has been enabled. This sequence cannot be terminated. Four minutes, fifty-five seconds to self-destruct. There will be no further audio or visual warnings.*”

“Doctor, lay in a course that will have the *Devonshire* ramming that ship at the same time the destruct sequence is completed.”

“Yes, sir.” Henglaar tapped in the instructions. “The course is locked in to the computer, Captain.”

“OK people, let’s get to our evac point. Move!” Knapp said, and they all piled into the turbolift.

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The Devonshire kept getting a pounding, as Knapp and crew raced towards their escape pods on the underside of the saucer of the ship. Arriving at their destination, they found that collapsed ceiling beams sealed off access to their escape. “Damn!” Knapp said, as he evaluated the situation. “How much time do we have?”

“About three minutes, sir.”

“OK, we can get to the aeroshuttle then. Let’s move!” They raced down the corridors, dodging fallen bulkheads and gushing steam, defending themselves from the beings still on the ship, engaged in a running firefight. Running smack into the medical teams carrying Abney and another injured crewman.

“Why the hell aren’t you off the ship?” Knapp demanded, as his group helped the others, edging closer to the aeroshuttle as they went.

“Our pods were blocked off, sir! We tried to get to the shuttlebay, but the intruders blocked our access there too.” Ensign Hawk said.

“There’s room in the aeroshuttle for us all. Come on, let’s go.” The group continued down the hall, arriving at the access doors for the shuttle. As the rest of the team was piling into the back of the winged shuttle, Captain Knapp and Ensign Witczak sat in the front pilot’s chairs, engaging the launch sequence, and buckling in, madly bringing systems online and charging up the little ships’ defenses.

“Buckle up back there, this is going to be rough!” Knapp said, as he reached for the manual release controls and activated them. There was a jolt, and the squeal of metal against metal, as the craft was dumped out of its hangar slot on the ship, and a roar of the impulse engines, as the aeroshuttle blasted out of the way of danger. Knapp’s crew watched as their ship leaned in towards the behemoth, the opponent firing madly at it, but it was too late. The ship slammed into the center of the alien vessel as it began to explode, first her saucer, then as it swung into the alien ship, the nacelles exploded as they were sheared off by the destruction of the fusion reactors powering the impulse engines. The mass of fire and explosions ripped through the enemy ship. Breaking in half, the explosions spread all over the vessel.

In its death throes, Knapp watched helplessly as his unknown foe fired missiles at the retreating Starfleet crew, destroying one of the escaping shuttles. Closing his eyes, he opened a channel to the pods. "This is Captain Knapp to all escape pods. Initiate long term survival mode; connect with the pods near you. Activate your beacons, and set them for the wide band emergency channels. All shuttlecraft report."

*"This is shuttle O'Neill, sir. We're OK here."*

*"Shuttle Napoleon reporting in sir."*

*"Shuttle Okuda, all systems functional, sir!"*

Knapp was pleased with his crew's foresight. All three reporting shuttles were Type-9. Fast, maneuverable, with weapons and power core upgrades. "Excellent. The shuttles and I will be providing point defense until relief ships can arrive. Conserve your energy folks, we might not be rescued for a while..." Knapp said, as he sighed deeply, the aftereffects of what had just happened beginning to settle in.

To be Continued...