

Deep Space, Shockwave Class Cruiser Persecutor.

-Zero Hour plus One Week Three Days

The Persecutor drifted through space. Out of her main docking bay small specks of light fell. As they went each activated a thruster, moving, and then disappearing into hyperspace. On the bridge Vice-Admiral Grath Rale eased back in the command chair.

Around him was the usual bustle of any large starship's bridge. Section heads supervised the operators in the crew pits, higher ranking officers stalked around. The bridges usual complement of mouse droids rolled about in specially recessed tunnels, taking sensitive data to the operations area at the rear of the bridge. The extensive crew who oversaw the running of the ship had an outpost on the bridge, though their usual domain was far below, in the armoured city that made up most of the ship. Down in the left crew pit there was unusual activity,

As each probe droid reported in its data was added to a target catalogue, which was in turn used to make the recommended target list for taskforce two. Grath was looking forward to seeing what interesting prey they would find.

--Zero Hour plus One Week Four Days

Grath Rale stood in the mapping room of the ship his macabre grin highlighted by the lights from the screens. The tactical hologram in the centre of the room was being updated every moment as more data flooded in. However he was not paying attention to that, he had selected his first target.

The system in question looked like a walkover, but had been given importance by the federation. It would serve as a useful means of discovering their tactical abilities, and political resolve. He would take his taskforce there, take over and wait.

-Bajor system

-Half an hour later

The Persecutor Decelerated, the rest of the taskforce appearing with her, immediately on arrival the imperials jammed all outgoing communications. Initially the commander of the small space station had refused to surrender. The levelling of a city had rapidly changed her mind. Now Kira Nerys waited in a cell aboard the alien command ship.

She was no stranger to incarceration. She had suffered it several times. This was different though. At least when fighting the cardassians she had known their agenda and their motives, the same for the dominion. This was a different threat than before though. This time there had been no promises of assistance, merely the business end of weapons pointed at her and her crew, continuously. She had had everything removed from her, including her ear-jewellery. She had then been thrown in a small extremely Spartan cell. Unlike those on the station this actually had a physical door. Personally she thought that was an improvement. It had not been designed for the psychological benefits of federation cells. The lighting was minimal. Well at least they were honest.

On the station things were a mess. Imperial technicians had begun to take it apart. They were rebuilding it in their own image. Already the crude reactors had been replaced with a small hypermatter module, and a new computer core was being installed. The old one was already removed and crated ready to be sent to gateway for analysis. The Replication system had been the source of some curiosity among the techs, whom had been endlessly imputing commands into it. One had even begun instructing it to produce a mass of every compound on the imperial material's database. It had had difficulty with heavy elements, and complex compounds.

In the midst of this chaos Lieutenant commander Cortsweien attempted to get all the technology samples crated and ready for transport. It was an uphill struggle. Whenever the techs removed something they insisted on replacing it. He stalked down the corridors barking at technicians whom he perceived to be 'slacking.' Outside the bulk transports and light craft clustered around the space station like vultures. The three 'runabout' craft attached to the station were being stowed into one of the smaller transports, while the crew of the station was being transferred from the persecutor into a prison craft. The Delphus was attached to one of the station's airlocks.

Cortsweien had been assigned to oversee the transport of captured materials back to the gateway system. He would have preferred to be capturing the materials, but it was good enough for now. Outside an imperial prison ship moved into a position recently vacated by a bulk transport. The grim exterior of the ship reflected its function. Already transport shuttles were beginning to ferry prisoners to the vessel. Lord Koloth had ordered all captives to be taken back to gateway for detailed questioning. The largest one of the station's craft, the defiant class gun-ship was sitting in the docking bay of one of the imperial star destroyers. It had been left intact; the vice admiral wanted it for future missions.

-San Francisco, Earth, UFP Headquarters

-Two days later

Rumours were circulating in starfleet headquarters. Rumours of another attack by the dominion. All contact with the planet Bajor had been lost. Admiral Paris was not really concerned, his son, and his new granddaughter had recently returned from the Delta Quadrant. Voyager was now landed on earth. Teams of technicians had begun analysing the new technologies they had brought with them. Soon the federation fleet would not have to worry about outside aggressors. He was walking with Captain Janeway, hearing all the anecdotes from the seven-year sojourn to the far side of the galaxy. Up ahead leaning against one of the deciduous trees that were sprinkled liberally around starfleet headquarters was a man in a starfleet uniform. He was surprised to note that the man was in fact an admiral. Whom he did not recognise as the man got up and walked towards them. Kathryn Janeway recognised him though. It was Q. The sneer was unmistakable.

"Oh Captain I really do think that you can do better..." Q said sauntering over to her

Captain Janeway looked at Q with distaste. For an entity that claimed to be so vastly superior to humanity he really was irritating. "What do you want Q?"

"Want, what do I want? Is there anything you could give me? If you meant to ask why am I here, then the answer is that I'm staking out a good seat." Janeway glared at him. "What for?"

"Oh that would be telling, and extremely unfair." Replied Q wagging a finger in the captain's direction. Janeway laughed. "Fair, when have you been fair? Mischievous, arrogant, self-satisfied, smug, annoying and generally unpleasant, but not fair."

Q mocked an expression of shock

"Moi, smug?" then became serious "if you knew how much I have to be smug about then perhaps you would eat your words, Mon capitane." He uttered contemptuously. With that he disappeared in his trademark flash of light

-Planet 14 Imperial 'outreach' survey

-Zero Hour plus Two Weeks

The Delphus dropped from hyperspace close to the planet. Lt. Commander Courtsweien was as usual on the bridge. This planet was inhabited by a primitive humanoid culture, identified by probe droid only a few days ago. They had not even colonised the other planets in their system. It was extremely likely that their citizens, if not their government would wish to join the empire. Leaning over the console he ordered the ship to land near a major population centre. The leader of the ambassadors stood at the door to the bridge. The imperial outreach program was designed to take control

of the recourses of un-exploited planets in this galaxy. This was one of its early tests. Lord Koloth had intended this as a minor project, but it had become far more important.

-Bajor system

At the same time the USS Centaur dropped out of warp into the Bajor system.

The area was deserted, apart from the loss of communications nothing seemed out of the ordinary. Captain Tanz ordered a sensor sweep of the system. The result was nothing. All of the ship's sensors returned no results at all. The ambassador class ship moved closer to the planet. The space station was in its usual position, but it seemed very different there were new modifications made to the station. It looked more ominous than before, and it was now armoured. Then a huge and ominous wedge revealed itself. It was accelerating towards the federation ship rapidly. Captain Tanz ordered the centaur to flee. He was wasting his effort.

Green streaks of fire lanced out and immolated the centaur as if it were a sacrificial offering to some primitive, wrathful god. On board the bridge of the Persecutor Vice-admiral Rale was disappointed. He had been expecting more of a kick from the locals. Whenever the empire lost contact with its protectorates, which was a rare event, it was usually a far more aggressive response. He was becoming more confident that his mission was going to become laughably easy.

- Gateway system, Imperial base of operations. Vengeance Class Star Cruiser "Imperial Wrath"

-Shortly afterwards

Lord Koloth looked out of the view ports on the bridge. Ahead of him the vast dagger of the Imperial Wrath pierced the void of space, in the distance the first new ships were almost completed. Merely small patrol ships and carrack light cruisers for now, the first new star destroyers and cruisers would not yet be ready for some time, and even then there was the problem of crewing them.

A communications officer was walking towards him. "My Lord we have a report from task force two. They have engaged a solitary alien vessel. It was destroyed." The man handed him a data pad and retreated back to the crew pit at the rear of the bridge.

Reading the message, and watching the accompanying visuals, He felt an urge to laugh. The contemptible locals of that region were truly weak.

-San Francisco, Earth, UFP Headquarters
-Two days later

Captain Kathryn Janeway stood outside the office of Admiral Price. She had been told that she was recalled from leave. The door slid open, the admiral sitting behind an oak desk on the far side of the office.

The situation developing in the bajoran system meant that the ship needed a new crew quickly. Unfortunately she was the only captain available for the new ship. Talking to it's first officer as she headed for the turbolifts she asked, "Why are we taking a ship from here, surely there is something closer?"

"Not really," He replied, "this ship is powered by a transwarp core."

"Borg?"

"No this functions differently, The engines produce a different speed curve, Warp one is equivalent to warp four, two is equivalent to warp eight, and warp nine is equivalent to warp thirty"

"Warp thirty?"

"In a way. The Lambda is also armed far better than any other craft in starfleet; we are carrying thirty phaser arrays, twenty photon torpedo turrets, and five dual quantum torpedo turrets. We also have a cloaking device, courtesy of the klingons" He stated with pride. "Deck one, bridge" he instructed the lift.

-Bajor System
-Ten hours later.

The Lambda decelerated from transwarp under cloak. The system was crawling with ships. None of them could be identified due to the extreme sensor jamming. Closing in the Lambda approached one of the alien ships. The bridge was quiet. On the main veivscreen was a victory class star destroyer.

The wedge shaped ship looked primitive, though it carried enough firepower to slag many its number of lesser craft. Even so it was an outdated ship, mainly intended for second line duties now. The lambda flew towards it, decloaking, and opening fire with every weapon at its disposal. A volley of forty quantum torpedoes arrowed towards the victory class ship. There was an eye-searing flash as the warheads detonated. Captain Janeway relaxed in her seat, "Report" she snapped. The Turbolaser bolt that vaporised the ship cut off the reply.

On the bridge of the Persecutor Admiral Rale noticed the flash in the distance. Turning to the Communications officers he asked, "What was that?" Lt. Kyleson, the chief communications officer turned in his hard-backed chair. "The Immolator is under attack sir, they report..." he craned his

head listening intently to his earpiece. "They were attacked by a ship that appeared from nowhere, and disappeared again."

"Did they hit it?"

Kyleson repeated the question. "Yes sir, but only once." Rale turned and left the bridge. "I will report this" he stated simply.

- Gateway system, Imperial base of operations. Vengeance Class Star Cruiser "Imperial Wrath"
-Shortly afterwards

The hologram of Vice Admiral Rale stood on the centre of the Desk. The various officers of the Imperial Wrath arrayed around him on the circular table. On the table in front of each officer a screen displayed the last moments of the Lambda. General Orkon spoke first. This is all very interesting, admiral, but what relevance does it have other than illustrating the weakness of the enemy. The stormtrooper commander next to him nodded. Ramend Kumar stared at the strategically, if not tactically deficient General. "It illustrated the technology involved in the enemy cloaking device, reset your images gentlemen, and you will see a clear illustration the enemy ability to detect vessels through their cloaking devices. That General is why this is relevant, not only is it a great advantage to them, it is also something we could use." The general stared at the venomous researcher. "Why can't you make devices like theirs?" he asked sceptically. "Gentlemen" interrupted Koloth "we shall make efforts to discover how they build such devices."

"My Lord," Rale spoke up "We already have a device, from the captured vessel."

"Excellent" replied Koloth, "I shall arrange for some of the prisoners to assist Mr. Kumar in making it function."

- Cell block #4, Vengeance Class Star Cruiser "Imperial Wrath"
-Shortly afterwards

Colonel Kira Nerys stared at the man opposite her. He was human, or at least as far as she could tell. He was tall, and dressed himself in a black padded suit. She found it strange that he wore no uniform. On either side of her stood the ubiquitous white-armoured troopers. "Now Colonel, I am sure you want to help us, it would avoid much unpleasantness" Looking down at her restraints she decided to go for the bravado option, she was unlikely to live very long anyway. "You call this pleasant?" she replied. He did not look amused "I'll take that as a no then? Perhaps I should explain this device for you. It is a simple shock table. As you can surely

tell, it is off at the moment, however should you refuse to co-operate with us it will be used to cause you considerable pain by nerve induction. Used with a mild stimulant drug or two, I am informed that it can be quite, quite painful. So, Colonel, what will it be?" He arched his eyebrows. She spat at him, unfortunately she was about a foot short. "Never mind, my dear, I'll give you some time to think it over. Flanked by his guards he left the room. The heavy door slid shut. The recessed lights in the ceiling flicked off, leaving her with only her discomfort and thoughts in the inky darkness.

-Shockwave class heavy cruiser Tormentor
-Borg space

"We are the Borg, You will be assimilated. Your biological and technological distinctiveness will be added to our own, resistance is futile." For the umpteenth time today Captain Warren heard this boring and repetitive intimidation slogan. It was interesting to speculate on exactly how any species could become so, stupid. The phalanx of cubes ahead began accelerating towards the Tormentor. Turbolasers spat out, wreaking havoc among the cubes. The cubes continued their acceleration.

- Commander's suite, Vengeance Class Star Cruiser "Imperial Wrath"

Koloth looked out of the observation windows. They were in fact screens. The rooms he was in were buried deep in the ship. Soon he would have to open the wormhole again. The emperor had scheduled a communication. He was sure that the emperor would be pleased with his success thus far.

At least he hoped so. He knew that he was being tested. This assignment neither required nor needed his presence. The Imperial Wrath coasted near the black hole, her prow aimed as an absurd dagger against the heart of that immense mass.

An emerald glow began to trace its way along specially constructed channels. The effect of the energies being released was far slower than the speed of light. It snaked its way from pylon to pylon, finally it touched the prow of the immense vessel. An emerald beam stabbed out at the black hole. If one were to see space and gravity at that moment as a flat plane, you would see the already huge gap begin to fall, rapidly accelerating to a single point.

A long time ago in a galaxy far far away another black hole began to change. Wisps of turquoise light began to form. In an instant so small that no instrument available to man was able to measure it the two black holes

linked. Technology indistinguishable from magic.

In his suite Koloth turned regarding the holo-projector, awaiting contact. He did not have to wait for long. The huge cowl shimmered into view. Stepping forwards he kneeled on the imaging pad.

Emperor Palpatine, the most powerful being in the known universe began to speak; "What have you to report?" he said, his voice had a deep resonance and a vibrating quality. Kane Koloth looked upwards. "My lord," he said "We have securely established a bridge-head and begun investigating this galaxy. " The emperor nodded "We have discovered that the inhabitants are even weaker than we had anticipated." The emperor cut off his report with a shocking statement. "The Death Star has been destroyed."

Koloth was confounded. He could not believe it. A huge number of men had been aboard the massive battle station. His thoughts paused and went back over that statement. Darth Vader had been aboard that station. He looked into the emperor's eyes. "Was Lord Vader aboard at the time?" He asked.

"He was not" replied the emperor. Through the force another message reached Koloth's mind 'This has been a major setback. I have a project for you. You must take this galaxy, and build a new fleet from it. I have seen the future, there is a chance that the empire will fall. This must not be allowed to happen. Details will arrive through the wormhole in a few moments. They will be encrypted in a droid brain aboard a cargo ship. It's code is TY-32. Build me a fleet worthy of the Sith."

The hologram disappeared like a conjured daemon. The room was cold.