

Star Trek: Torrent

None But The Wise

By Professor Augustine

As Captain Sam Bradwell walked along the sidewalk he took delight in the sun shining through some ominous looking clouds. Sure, the smell of smog was a detractor, but it was always nice to walk the surface of a new world. An experience shared was an experience doubled, so he chatted to his friend Dr. Sarah McKenzie as the crowds passed by.

Within the Federation there was a well-known theory that most planets were Earth-like and had variations of human cultures. Sam had explored ten of these when he served with T'Mol so he was well acquainted with the idea while they worked on those secret missions.

The planet they were currently exploring was similar to Earth at the turn of the twenty-first century, around 2010, only World War Three had yet to break out. It was on the verge of discovering another problem though; the Federation was expanding their borders which would encompass this sector of space. If they did not this planet would be conquered by the Romulan Empire. There was a small survey mission and as per protocol, the less people

they had on the planet the lower the chance they was would be discovered.

It was a real shock to see the path of history that humanity had taken instead of the constant warfare that soaked the history of Earth in the blood of its own.

Sarah was looking at a newspaper when a loud semi-truck came roaring by, almost tearing it from her grip as the wind jostled it. Annoyed, she checked her chronometer and her eyebrows shot up. "Commander Sullivan must be worried. We haven't checked in yet." Sarah was not comfortable with field work and yet this planet was like coming home. *Sam spent the early part of his career spying on unsuspecting worlds with that Vulcan woman T'Mol he was so fond of talking about, she thought. He must be old hat at this.*

"Don't worry, as soon as we get out of the city we will open a comm link with the ship and beam home."

"I thought we were already home." Sarah joked, nodding toward the crowd of people. Nothing like being in a city full of humans to feel at ease.

"Captain's Log, First Officer Sullivan reporting. Stardate 2366.10. The Torrent was exploring a dark matter nebula when something new appeared on our screens. At first I thought it was another Starfleet ship, but then I recognized the cloaking field. Three Romulan ships are just outside the nebula waiting for us."

From the command chair things always looked different with the darkened warning lights and the red accents of the computers under emergency lighting making things looked hellish. The dark matter nebula was generating a powerful interference field that was creating enough disruption to hide them from the otherwise powerful Romulan technology.

“Have you patched through the Romulan code to see what the ships were saying to each other?” There had been a lot of chatter between the Romulan ships as they arrived at the nebula and some of it had been recorded.

From directly behind her Lieutenant Keller was running translation programs on the intercepted transmissions. When he was at the Academy Keller had been an expert at translating Romulan and now it was paying off in a big way. “I've got some of the message translated. The communications array is no longer secure on their ships when they're this close to a dark matter nebula.” He checked the readout and translated the decrypted message in his head. “They were in this sector investigating the planet the Captain and Doctor McKenzie are on. Then they picked up something they thought was a Starfleet ship – us – and when they got to the perimeter of the nebula their sensors went haywire.”

Commander Sullivan shook her head, “So their computers may be having a worse time with the interference than ours are. We just need to hold out here long enough for them to

leave.” So, it had become a matter of waiting then. She hoped.

Keller held the communications device close to his ear, “It almost sounds like there is some kind of garbled language out there.” Keller was not joking. Every time he listened for the Romulans he heard some kind of background noise chattering away that made his skin crawl.

From the science station Lieutenant Harrison looked up. “Commander, we have another problem.”

“And what is that, Mister Harrison?”

The young officer had a look of sudden shock on his face. “What happens if Captain Bradwell and Doctor McKenzie try to contact the ship while we're hiding from the Romulans?”

A dark thought crept into her mind. “Either they'd pinpoint our location and the Romulan ships would begin firing torpedoes at us until we explode, or they would not be able to trace the transmission to us, only the source. Then they would turn and go after the Captain and Doctor.” It was now a waiting game. The next few hours would tell them what would happen. If the Captain tried to contact them that would be the deciding factor.

On the viewscreen the dark and purple clouds of the nebula swirled around casting an eerie glow into the dark bridge. Now we sit back, and wait.

It was pouring rain outside the library as Captain Samuel Bradwell glanced at Sarah as she read over the map, thinking to himself he hated being right about the weather. They had barely beaten the cloudburst. He turned back to his reading when Sarah's raised voice echoed through the quiet, aged room.

“I think I found the one difference between this world and Earth!” She was very excited as she looked at the land contours that were so familiar.

Sam looked up from the history book and quietly asked: “What is it?” He hoped his tone would be enough of a hint.

In a whisper she continued: “Out in the Atlantic ocean, a few miles off the shore of Ellis Island, is a big island that no one seems interested in exploring.” Doctor McKenzie's usually tempered voice had been abandoned due to her discovery. To her it was like discovering the Ark of the Covenant.

Considering the massive parallels between this planet and Earth, it was a singular anomaly. “Really?”

“Yes, it appears that it is more or less abandoned and no one goes there. At one time there was a colony there, but the people were all killed and the official explanation was an unknown disease broke out. It is still uninhabitable.”

The Captain had a choice. Either beam up to the *Torrent* and back down again or use some of the local resources. He certainly knew which would be more fun. “I wonder

how long it would take to secure passage to that island,” he said with a sly grin.

Doctor McKenzie smiled as she held up her field trauma kit and began to rummage through the series of fake ID badges they had replicated before leaving the *Torrent*. “Well, my dear Captain, take your pick.”

The government of this world was strangely similar to the one Earth had during the same time period, and so the ID badges were the key to getting the two everywhere. To their luck neither had been detected by anyone and spending the rest of the rainy Saturday in the musty library was helping them hide in plain sight. Bradwell looked through the badge collection they had already tested. The trick was to use the one that would go unnoticed by the proper authorities.

A loud crash came echoing from behind the bookcase to their right and as Sam turned to see who was there. He found a young man who was trying to hide himself in the pile of old books that had fallen around him and doing a bad job of it. He looked terrified as Sam and Sarah walked over to him. “How long have you been there?” the Captain asked.

“What planet are you guys from?” The boy asked with as much courage as a teenager could muster.

Sam scowled. “Well, so much for the Prime Directive,” he quietly growled. Captain Bradwell sighed and buried his

head in his folded arms as he rested against an old, oak bookshelf.

“Captain's log, supplemental. The Romulan ships are still stalking us outside the nebula, and I am beginning to worry about the anti-matter storage integrity field.”

Diana Sullivan walked through the labyrinth of computers and wires that were hooked into the warp core. There was an uncomfortable level of smoke rising from the cables as Lt Commander Vernon Barksdale walked her through the maze. “Over here we can see the degradation of the deuterium tanks. Only twenty more hours, and then we'll have a containment field failure. And then, BOOM!”

Diana sighed as she watched the tanks fume. At least Vernon's attempt at levity had given her a chance to smirk. “I have to find some way of getting us out of the nebula without the Romulans detecting us,” she confided. “There must be some way of doing that without giving away our position.”

In his mind's eye Vernon considered the enemy vessels. “The Romulan warbirds are just as vulnerable in here as we are. If we can get them closer to the nebula we might be able to disable them somehow.” The engineering chief was experienced dealing with Romulans so he was the closest thing to an expert on their ship designs Starfleet had. Diana was aware he was also really resourceful when it came to extreme situations like this one.

Commander Sullivan shook her head as she looked around her at the mess of lower engineering. She was confident Vernon was on to something. “OK, I want a working plan in three hours, understand?”

“Yes, Commander. Understood.” Vernon began to look through the engineering computers and started to run simulations.

Samuel Bradwell stood and clapped his hand to his forehead. To his chagrin he realized he had been found out by a kid! He had been careless and now who knew what would happen. He was talking with Sarah at the table after they had been assured no one else was in the library. He had kept the away team to two members for the very reason to minimize possible contamination.

The young man decided he needed to explain himself to the strangers. “I followed you two here from the bus station. I wondered where you worked and just followed you from there. I really am sorry, but I just wanted to know who you were. I mean, in those suits you both looked like government agents. Then, when I saw the stuff in your bag I just knew there was something wrong.”

Sarah shook her head, she couldn't believe the kid had heard everything they said. She looked at Sam. “I told you we should have waited till we got to the hotel to discuss this.”

Now was not the time for passing the buck, Sam realized. Take care of the situation at hand, his training told him.

The boy spoke again, hoping to garner some more information and perhaps confirm his suspicions. “I heard you talking about the Forbidden Island. Are you guys planning to go there?”

Not wishing to let on anything else, he simply offered: “If we can find a way.” Sam watched the city of New York become drenched in soaking rain through the window. Perhaps there was a way they could enlist the boy's help without actually confirming they were extra-terrestrials. After all, they still looked just like everyone else.

The boy was eager to please. “I have access to a nice boat if you guys need a ride.”

The duo looked at each other, sharing their thoughts silently. Dr. McKenzie nodded to her captain. “Give me and my friend a moment,” she stated. They walked over to the side corner of the library. “Well, Sam what do you want to do?”

He sighed as he looked over to the guy. “I don't know if we can trust him, but at least he is the only one who figured out we were from another planet. He looks harmless for the most part.” He shrugged. “Even if we get him to give us some help, in the end we leave him no more reason to believe we're from another world. I think his curiosity is overwhelming his natural sense of self-

preservation. We can use that to our advantage and give the lad an adventure at the same time.”

Sarah nodded her assent and gave him a small grin. She had to see the beauty of the situation.

Together, the two walked back, their footsteps falling and echoing throughout the empty labyrinth of books and shelves. Captain Bradwell held out his hand, “What’s your name, young friend?”

He returned the gesture. “Richard Landers. Now, we need to find my girlfriend. After all, she is the one with the boat.”

The *Torrent* was now even deeper into the dark matter cloud, and outside the three Romulan ships were still waiting. Vernon Barksdale was in sickbay talking with Nurse Marsha Daniels. “I think this plan will work, but I know we are going to take the risk of the Romulan ships seeing us.” Vernon had burned the back of his hand on the warp coolant system when a wrench slipped. It was OK, after all, it gave him a chance to talk with the cute Nurse Marsha Daniels, but he was so engrossed in discussing his work he had forgotten to ask her to have dinner with him.

By the time he remembered he was looking at a clean hand and realized he had to go give a presentation to the Commander. The opportunity had been lost. He thanked her then turned to leave. He sighed as the doors closed behind him and walked down the corridor. A ticking clock

was running in his head, seventeen hours and fifty minutes. That's all they had left before they were atomized.

The conference room was all ears as Commander Sullivan watched the pink, purple, and pitch black clouds all around the ship through the observation window. Commander Barksdale was going through the technical details of the plan and he was losing the crew. Diana shot him a look that said: Cut to the chase. He got the message.

“Essentially guys what we can do is detonate a few subspace explosions at the far ends of the nebula. The result should be enough to push the nebula onto the Romulan ships. It will put them in the same boat as we are and give us a chance to go pick up the Captain and Doctor and slip away.”

Commander Sullivan shook her head as she looked at the plan's details. “Alright, Mister Barksdale, you have impressed me once again. I want those charges ready to go in an hour. We don't need to be here any longer than we have to.”

“It will take a little time to load the torpedo bays with the sensor probes armed with detonators, but after that it should not be a problem.” He was always proud when the hardnosed?” First Officer gave him her seal of approval.

Lieutenant Keller raised a finger. “Before we leave I would like to say I found out the garbled noise was Romulan

feedback that was being reflected in the clouds and bouncing back to us.”

Diana nodded. At least she knew what the creepy noise was now. “Alright then, in three hours I want us out of the nebula and heading toward that planet to pick up the Captain. Dismissed.” With that the crew stood up and separated to their new tasks while Diana was left alone. She had been in command before and was not concerned with the burden of her decisions but she did fear for the Captain and her friend Sarah McKenzie. Part of her was thankful they had not tried to contact the *Torrent* yet. It was a small blessing, but there was no telling what would happen next. Never mind the fact the Captain was overdue for a check in. There was no knowing what was happening to them on that just discovered world. She was itching to get answers but her hands were tied. Her first responsibility was to the ship.

For now, the waiting to see if the chief engineer's plan was the right one would occupy her thoughts until they were free of the Romulan gauntlet.

The clouds overhead gave the city of New York an ominous feel as Sam and Sarah rode with their new friend Rick. The rain has stopped but there was no guarantee the heavens would not unleash their fury once more. Sam turned his attention from the sky to the uptown buildings. “Your girlfriend lives in a fairly nice part of town.”

Rick, as he had insisted his new extra-terrestrial friends call him, shook his head. "Yeah, tell me about it! She texted me and said she would be eager to take the boat out today. Wait until I tell her we are going to the Forbidden Island!" Rick and his girlfriend had been dating for a year and this would be their most adventurous outing.

The neighborhood had exotic trees overhanging the road and the noise and dirt of the city was a few blocks away. "Does your girlfriend make a lot of money?" Sarah asked, curious.

"Oh, hell yeah, she does! Her family is loaded!" Rick loved bragging about that.

Sarah McKenzie had enjoyed riding in this ancient automobile. She was looking back through her mind recalling old Earth vernacular. Ah, yes! Loaded meant she was rich. "So glad Earth moved beyond money after World War Three," she whispered in the captain's ear. Sam shook his head in full agreement.

They pulled up to a very nice looking house with a even nicer car then the one they were in. As Sam looked out the window he saw the young woman Rick was talking about sitting on the stoop of her house. Rick jumped out and the couple began to talk among themselves. Sam turned to Sarah in the back of the car. "I think we made a mistake wearing these suits. They don't blend in at all here. I feel conspicuous."

Sarah had to agree. The couple was having some kind of intimate discussion as she smiled at Rick. The two turned and gestured for Sam and Sarah to get out of the car and join them. The taxi driver gestured at them, expecting the ride was over and to be paid. Sam gave him some of their replicated currency and the man was content.

As they alighted the young woman gave them a smile of greeting. "Hi, I'm Lacy. Rick told me you guys wanted to sail out to Forbidden Island. I think that would make for a really wild afternoon." That was not something that gave Sam much confidence, but he was happy to take the ride to explore this world's one anomaly.

The couple was a perfectly normal 21st century pair and today they were getting ready for a double-date. Sam and Sarah had convinced the girl that they were dating and wanted to have a nice getaway. They had even shared a brief kiss to convince them. Sam got to know the details of the young couple's relationship while they caught another cab to the dock and got an interesting education in the relationship culture that was predominant in their society.

Sarah got a real kick out of being around the two; they reminded her of her son Cameron and his lady friend. It was at times like these she missed her kids.

When they found themselves on the dock they saw the boat in question was a large yacht with a tall mast and Sam was reminded of his love for sea stories. He looked forward to their short voyage. However, he found that their hostess was a precocious young woman who wanted to know

everything about him. Unfortunately he was only able to tell her very little. The rest was pure fiction. To his amusement, Rick had come up with a ridiculous cover story for them that they were university professors and this was a survey trip.

He had to fight every natural instinct not to take command as the yacht motored out into the harbor. Once they made open water they picked up the prevailing wind and soon they left the land far behind them.

As Lacy told him about her life Sam found she reminded him of Commander Sullivan. I wasn't just her similar hair but the regal attitude as she had with her lover nearby.

He went below decks and flipped open his communicator. It was way beyond time for their check-in. "Captain Bradwell to the *Torrent*. Please respond, over." The device had a small scroll of text appear over the swirling lights. It read: Out of range. *What the hell is happening? Where is my ship?*

The small probes launched in three different directions and within seconds had made their way to their destinations at opposing ends of the dark matter cloud. As she watched them fly Commander Sullivan felt her palms wet with perspiration. Her nerves were starting to get to her. She heard someone report: "The probes are at the desired destinations, getting ready to execute plan of operations."

“Execute.” The viewscreen lit up with the distant detonations.

Then Lieutenant Harrison at the science station began to shout: “Commander, the dark matter nebula is moving over to engulf the Romulan ships! Wait a minute, the nebula is destabilizing. It’s...” That was the last thing he said before the cloud detonated and sent the Romulan craft in uncontrolled spirals.

Commander Sullivan found herself on the floor having been knocked down by the explosion. She looked at the screen and saw two Romulan ships had stalled and one was badly damaged. It seemed to be venting more than drive plasma. Was that atmosphere? She heard a scrape and saw Lieutenant Jensen had regained his footing and was leaning over Ensign Corey at helm control. “Well, that’s done it, they’ve seen us.”

Lacy Yale loved the feel of the waves breaking on the bow of the sail boat, and had to admit she loved the anticipation of going to Forbidden Island. They had been in luck and picked up a twenty knot westerly that was pushing them along nicely and neatly slicing them through the slight chop. She had been happy to take the vessel out on her own with her guests. Her father had been taking her out sailing since she was an infant.

She lifted her eyes to the horizon and saw the distant shoreline of Forbidden Island. It never occurred to her it

was an odd name for an island. Indeed, she had no idea what its real name actually *was*. No one knew what they would find. The mystery wasn't the only one on her mind. She was very curious about her boyfriend's new friends. They were very nice to be sure, but the one thing she was certain of was they were not milk toast professors.

The water sparkled as the waves broke over the bow and the smell of salt permeated the air while the ship picked up speed towards the strange island that was getting closer and closer. All her life Lacy had heard stories that the island had beasts that devoured the original colonists, but these were just urban legends of course. But then again, who knew, right?

Sam Bradwell watched the broken and seemingly dead trees on the shore line begin to take clear shape and the rocky shoals were looking more like foreboding tombstone heads than anything else. The island looked like it had defied the laws of nature in order to form this close to the shoreline of New York, and had simply poked up out of the ground with its pointed rocks. In all his time surveying planets he had not seen geology like this before and it gave him reason to take it all in and enjoy the strange scenery. All the salt air was nice, but it was bringing back more memories of T'Mol to his mind. Every planet they went to had a lovely ocean for the most part. The water lapping up against the side of the boat sent his mind back to that horrible day when he lost her and once more he had to fight back tears of regret.

Now they were getting closer to the shore, Lacy returned to the wheel and took over from Rick. Using the automated system she dropped sail and reengaged the diesel motor. She smiled at the older woman next to her and was reminded once again why Rick's friends seemed such an odd couple. She was clearly about twenty years older than her companion.

Sarah had taken a liking to her, and since the two ladies had talked a new found respect for Rick had come home to roost within her. Lacy had fallen in love with Rick after the devastating loss of his best friend when he made one fatal mistake. Lacy was willing to give him another chance when they started dating, and wanted him to forget all about that girl. This was one other way to make that happen, and she was appreciative of his new friends for helping as well.

Lacy looked at Sam and she noted the way he carried himself she could almost think that he was a military commander. Then there was Sarah, who on more than one occasion had mentioned children that reminded her of Rick.

Their maps had described a jetty and Lacy expertly brought the small vessel up next to it. Both men quickly tied the yacht off to it.

To the totally surprise of the youths Sam stated matter-of-factly: "I am afraid this is where your little trip ends."

“Excuse me?” Both the young people asked as Sam and Sarah stepped onto the old wooden jetty. Lacy folded her arms and complained: “We traveled over an hour, there's no way we are turning back.”

Sam found he didn't have to convince them as, suddenly, there was a growl that came from nearby that sounded seriously unfriendly. The cry was blood curdling and the unflappable Sam smiled back to Lacy. “So you kids still coming with us?” He knew enough about their culture to know that the island was reported to have strange creatures on it. Maybe that would be enough to frighten them away.

Lacy's face had turned pale as she looked at Rick. Terrified, she stammered: “As a matter of fact I think me and Rick will just enjoy the rest of the day back home. You guys can find your way back to the mainland right?”

Sam grinned and shook his head “We should be all right. We can phone in another ride later.”

Lacey shook her head at the mad couple and quickly loosed the yacht and turned her towards home. Sam and Sarah watched it go for a few moments as it disappeared into the distance. Once they were certain they were out of earshot they discussed the situation.

“For some reason the *Torrent* has moved out of orbit otherwise I would have been able to detect them on my communicator,” Sam mused as Sarah began to follow him toward the source of the noise. He reached into her satchel and found the tricorders. The machine began scanning, no

human lifeforms on this island. However, it was detecting a peculiar and powerful energy source that was not native to any Earth planet he was familiar with. The noise was coming from the same direction. He shared his discovery with the Doctor and they proceeded with their investigation. Sam noted that as he walked on the moist ground his skin was crawling. There was something about this place he just didn't like.

Sarah waved her tricorder ahead of them. "Detecting strange lifesigns right ahead Captain. We should be getting closer to the power source." Then Sarah looked up and saw the strangely flat cliff right ahead of her. "Never mind, Sir, I think we found the place."

To their surprise the side of the cliff face began to open up to reveal a white interior and long corridor that seemed to disappear into the distance. There were no signs of light panels. The illumination just appeared to come from everywhere.

Sam Bradwell held his arm out, smiled and said: "Ladies first, Sarah."

She gave him a little smirking grin and began walking into the strange corridor. As they entered they found something that made them both almost smile. It was a device mounted onto the wall that was playing the roars and growls of many animals all at once.

"I think we found the monsters of the Forbidden Island," Sam said with a grin, Sarah laughed but neither would have

if they knew someone was watching them. The looped recording made him chuckle to think this was the source of many an urban legend, but that was the only thing that made him chuckle all day.

The *Torrent* was adrift. The Romulan ships could be clearly seen where the cloud had dispersed. They were seriously damaged, one having lost its left warp nacelle. From the bridge of the *Torrent* Commander Sullivan watched Mister Barksdale trying to activate the warp engines or at least the impulse engines so they could get to the planet. She hoped the Romulans had taken so much damage to their ships so that their sensors may have not been able to detect them.

Finally, she got some good news as Vernon said: “We have impulse engines but it will take some time to get back to the planet.”

“That's all we need, Lieutenant Commander. Set a course for the planet at full impulse.”

“Then what, Commander?” Ensign Corey asked without even thinking about protocol.

“Then, Mister Corey, we pray we can get through to the Captain wherever he is.” She leaned back in the Command chair, her thoughts were running wild as always. Would she get the *Torrent* to the planet without the Romulan ships chasing them down? If they did, what would they find had happened to Captain Bradwell and Doctor McKenzie on

the planet below? A million horrifying scenarios played out before her eyes, but they all involved one thing: the possibility of her own failure.

The long white hallway was not as featureless as they first expected. Sarah found a small alcove filled with cylinders and on them was some kind of alien writing. Her medical tricorder was going crazy as she stood there looking over the cylinders. “Captain, this is remarkable! These cylinders all contain DNA samples from the cultures of space that we have encountered. For example, this cylinder contains enough DNA to create an entire race of Vulcans.”

Bradwell looked at the open walls and all the cylinders in awestruck wonder. “I wonder why someone would want to do that.” Sam was talking to himself, but someone else standing down the corridor unnoticed to Sam or Sarah but watching both with extreme interest.

The being tried to use his voice but found he’d forgotten how to vocalize sounds. He coughed once then spoke for the first time in centuries and his voice had lost his once proud timbre but had been replaced with soft somber one of a librarian. A startled duo heard him say: “Well, Mister Bradwell, why don't you let me explain things. First, tell me, are you both from that starship that was in orbit a few hours ago?” He looked down at the floor. “I am sorry. Where are my manners? My name is Nahal. I am the keeper of this facility.”

Even given the uncertainty of the situation, Sam smiled at the old man. In his eyes Nahal looked harmless enough, but looks were almost always deceiving. "I am Captain Samuel Bradwell, from the Federation Starship *Torrent*. Nice to meet you, Nahal." He was wearing white robes and looked to be impossibly old.

Ancient eyes met young. "Well, I am delighted people from Earth finally found our little Gene Bank. Here, let me show you around."

Sarah had to keep from seeming too enthusiastic. The term gene bank sounded dangerously close to another word that she dared not say but thought: Genetic Engineering. "I am the chief medical officer of the *Torrent*. Please, tell me what you mean by gene bank?"

Then Nahal smiled happily "Oh, yes, certainly! Over ten million years ago my people founded this little outpost. They planted their seed all across the galaxy, and knowing the ambiguous nature of their creations they created a means by which all the creatures could be recreated if they met with some cataclysm. I fear it might come sooner rather than later." Nahal had to stop every once and a while for breath, he would hold the edge of the wall and take in long, deep lungfuls of air.

Sam was dumbstruck. The enormity of his statement was taking some time to sink in. "You mean this lab was where the many races of our galaxy were founded?" The idea seemed impossible to fully grasp.

“Yes.” The old man said in a very matter of fact voice as he looked at the shocked faces of the aliens. “When they left this galaxy for other worlds this place was built as a failsafe facility, and equipped with an observatory so we may detect any possible threat.”

Sarah had heard enough. His statements were the sum of her worst nightmares. “This place cannot be allowed to continue. Genetic engineering nearly destroyed Earth during the Eugenics Wars, and when Khan Singh was found by Captain Kirk the man was nearly impossible to beat.” She gestured at some of the vials. “These creatures you have could be found by other alien races, the Klingons, or the Romulans, God knows who else could find this place! What if they got the best of you and stole the genetic information here? It would completely change the balance of power in this sector. Captain, we have to put a stop to this!” Sarah was furious. The whole thing was beyond the pale of reasoning to her mind.

Captain Bradwell knew she was right, but the old man was insistent in showing him a room. Sam tried to put her at ease and said, using his command tone: “I want to hear what he has to say about his people and this threat he mentioned.”

The three walked down a curved corridor into a room glowing with an enormous star chart with an oval display of alien images playing on the wall. “You see, Captain, the images before you see are recordings taken in an area of space your people call the Delta Quadrant.”

The thought of having insight into a distant part of their galaxy drew Sam's eyes like a magnet. The image was showing a strange metallic cube with green light glowing within. "Nahal, who are these people?" he asked as he the image zoomed in and he saw the strange aliens covered in odd biomechanical technology.

The old man gave a sigh that spoke of great concern. "These people are the threat. They call themselves the Borg and I foresee a day when the whole universe may fall under their control. This place was built and designed to act as an ark in the event that does happen. It must be protected." To his dismay his guests were not taking the news very well, especially the Doctor. She stepped over to a vial of DNA and her hand brushed the phaser in her bag as she considered her options and turmoil within her. "No, Doctor, I implore you!" he shouted, knowing what would happen.

Before Nahal do anything more the room shut off the projector and defensive technology activated. The room filled with powerful, red lights and the old man was lucky enough to have avoided the area affected. Nearby, the humans lay asleep and on the wall a new scene was playing, one showing a Vulcan woman drowning. The computer had reading the Captain's mind.

The *Torrent* was trying to outrun the Romulan ship which was firing disruptor pulses at the Federation ship. Diana Sullivan sighed as the blast went right ahead and passed

the *Torrent* as it barely missed their port side. For a moment, when she looked at the Romulan design, the two warp nacelles sticking out at the edges almost looked like talons, or fangs.

“Were lucky that didn't hit us!” Ensign Corey yelled as he looked at the viewer, and his brash, untamed youth sounded his terror. He had never been in a situation like this, and the only way to quell the fires of youth was in the fire of battle.

Commander Sullivan held the chair as Lieutenant Jensen shouted from the tactical console. “It should take the Romulan ship a few minutes to fire again, their energy levels are so low. We bought ourselves a little time. Commander, got any plans?”

“Not really, Lieutenant. The only one I have is not dying right now.” Their ship was in better shape than the Romulan's and that was giving them the edge for now. However, engineering had yet to restore the *Torrent's* weapons and shields. “Take us into orbit around the planet. Maybe they will think twice before attacking us in a gravity well.” Then the ship began to shake as the *Torrent* slowed down into orbit. It was unusual and Diana expected an explanation. “Science, what the hell just happened?”

“A force field from the planet took control of our ship and weapons systems. They also took control of the Romulan ship, Commander. Their shields and weapons are down.”

“Saved our damn skins, Lieutenant.” Commander Sullivan said as she gazed at the planet. Now all she had to do was find her crew members.

Sam Bradwell opened his eyes and saw Nahal standing beside him. “Your ship was being chased by the Romulans, Captain. The only way to help your friends and prove my intent is peaceful was to disable both your ships and keep them from fighting one another. There is something else Captain, before you get up and walk around you should know I wanted to help you get over her.”

There was something about his voice that gave Sam a sense of foreboding. He stopped as he sat up and he saw the girl laying on the table next to him. Doctor McKenzie was already scanning her with her med kit. He put his hand on his forehead as he watched the girl with pointed ears lying there, her eyes closed, apparently sleeping. On some level he realized the truth of what he saw. He looked to Sarah and said: “Is that who I think it is?” She was about six years old, she sported jet black hair atop her stolid eyes, no doubt those were from her mother’s lineage, and pointed ears. Sam looked more closely at them. They had something else which betrayed the identity of her mother, a small curve towards her face which most Vulcans did not have, but T’Mol did.

Sarah was stunned. It was hard for her to believe what she saw. She shook her head as she checked her findings on

her tricorder. “Captain, from all my readings this is your daughter.”

Nahal seemed desperate to be understood. “You see, I was so focused on the Romulan ship in orbit that I left the computer to operate on automatic. As it scanned your memories, I saw the Vulcan woman you loved, and the computer merged DNA from the Vulcan Cylinder to show you what we can do. I believe it even found traces of T’Mol’s DNA in your cell structures and extrapolated the rest. It then created memories based on what it knew about Vulcans and humans.” He was nervous as he saw Sam look down at the girl, his face full of uncertainty. Nahal smiled, a weak, feeble attempt to make the two, sorry, now three, feel more at home about the whole situation. “Her name is Molly, and she has emotions, just like her father according to these memories I see here.” He gestured at the display on the wall. Blurry images that merged and coalesced played out. There were snippets of Sam swinging her on a play set. Beach trips and even times having him read a bedtime story.

As he watched, Sam found he was trying to fight back the swell of emotions. Like most widowers, he wished he had something to remind him of his lost love, especially children. For that to come now was more than a dream come true, it was a miracle. Through a tight throat he said: “When T’Mol and I were on a mission she went through the Vulcan Pon Farr. While there were no children, I always wondered what would happen if we did have kids. I

dreamed of being a father for the longest time, but gave that up. Now I have that chance back and this place gave it to me.” His trepidation was quickly being replaced by elation.

Fearing for her friend, Sarah had to remind him of the cold reality of the situation. “Sam, she is genetically engineered! Can you imagine what Starfleet will do when we get back? They will say, Khan Noonien Singh has a successor and you have brought her to their doorstep! She will never be accepted, and you know that.”

Sam feared that Sarah was right.

Suddenly, the place shuddered and the old man turned around in fear. “The Romulan ship broke free and has locked onto our position! You should get back to your ship!” Nahal was very nervous as he looked to the computer screens.

The young girl's eyes flickered open and her eyes went wide with fear. She turned and her gaze caught Sam's face and suddenly everything was so much better. “Daddy!” she cried. “What's happening?”

The question was now moot. There was no way Sam was going to leave her behind. He was resolute. “Sarah, we can't leave her! I *can't* leave her! Contact the *Torrent*. We need to get back!” Sam picked up the girl then continued as Sarah opened her communicator “Tell the ship we are coming back with a child.” The whole place shook once again, and this time some of the ceiling fell on them.

“Doctor McKenzie to *Torrent*. Please respond.” This nonsense right here was the reason she hated going on away missions.

The answer was immediate. “This is Commander Sullivan, you two better be ready to beam up we only have one shot at this.”

Sarah looked over to the Captain. “Make that three to beam up. I will explain when we get there.”

Sam stepped forward and swept Molly up into his arms. His heart melted as she wrapped herself around his neck and put her head on his shoulder. “Please, take me home, Daddy,” she said fearfully.

There was nothing else in the universe he would have done at that moment. He held her close as he heard: “Confirmed, Doctor. Prepare to beam up to the ship.”

It was all a haze as Nahal struggled to keep the facility intact while another series of disruptor blasts hit the station. As the transporter effect covered them Nahal took one final chance. “Captain, I lied. There are more arks!”

The next thing Sam knew they were standing on the transporter platform of the *Torrent*.

He saw the strange look on the chief's face. “Who's the kid?”

“I'll explain later,” said Sam as he stepped down from the platform. He put Molly down and squatted next to her. “I need you to go with Sarah, OK?”

Behind him the chief started when Molly said: “All right, Daddy.”

He nodded to Sarah then headed for the bridge. By the time he got to there the *Torrent* was speeding away from the Romulan ship that was still lagging in the solar system. “What happened to the facility you beamed us up from?” he asked.

Commander Sullivan looked down at the viewscreen and saw the island that was boiling red with fire. “The Romulan ship destroyed the facility. Sir, tell me what is with the girl you brought back?” The complex was in complete ruins, it had been destroyed and most of the island was burning but still intact.

On the viewscreen, the Romulan ship was struggling to come about. “Sitrep,” Sam ordered. At his side, Diana filled him in. Two of the Romulan ships were devoid of life. Their atmospheres had been totally vented. The remaining vessel had weapons but no shields. Their warp drive as toast but their impulse drive was operating, if only at twenty percent.

“What is the Romulan's weapons status?” he barked.

“Recharging, Captain. They will be able to fire again in ninety seconds.”

It was a narrow window, but there was enough time to make things right for Rick, Lacy and the rest of their people. “Bring us about. Full impulse power. Ready tractor beam.”

Diana saw the plan and thought it nuts, but she also had confidence in her captain. “Aye, Captain!” She started barking orders to bring his plan into action. “Bring us under her keel and lock on. Her ventral disruptors are down.”

As the *Torrent* raced forward she spun on her axis and came about, presenting her engineering section, and her tractor emitter, towards the underside of the ship's saucer. Within seconds they had the Bird of Prey in their grasp and were tugging it downwards into the atmosphere.

“Forty seconds until the Romulans have recharged.”

Sam stared ahead, resolute. “Steady on. Take us further into the atmosphere.”

The green warbird came about in a vain attempt to bring her weapons to bear on the *Torrent* but it was already too late for her. While both vessel's hulls were glowing red from the friction from the air rushing over them, it was clear the Romulan vessel was losing its fight for life.

“Let her go,” Sam said, knowing full well he was dooming the opposing ship but knowing he had little choice. “Take us out.”

The *Torrent* came about and brought her nose up and moved steadily out into space. Her hull cooled as the atmosphere thinned and then disappeared entirely. Behind them, the Bird of Prey continued falling, her hull plates burning and tearing off. Within seconds, the ship turned from being surrounded by fire to becoming a flying

inferno. It became a ball of falling debris and, by the time it splashed into the ocean, there was very little left that could be recognized as once being a starship.

Once Sam was convinced it was over he said: "Come about. Lay in a course for the remaining warbirds. Scan them completely then destroy what remains. I want no evidence left that they were ever here. The people of this world need to be looked after." He stood and stretched for a moment. "I am going to recommend this world become a Federation Protectorate." He looked over at Commander Sullivan. "Conference room. One hour." He then turned and left her to her duties. As the turbolift doors closed his parting thought was: *What's going to happen when they find out my daughter is genetically engineered?*

Diana watched him go realizing he had never answered her question and wondered why.

An hour later Sam sat and marveled at Sarah's ability to spout believable bull. He made a mental note to treat everything she told him in future with a dose of salt.

There were traces of truth like the part where Molly had been created by a machine and that the DNA had been sourced from himself and traces of DNA left within him from his passionate Pon Farr with T'Mol (she left out the last part). However, he was fully aware that there couldn't have been enough to create an entire lifeform.

The fiction came from the notion that the machine had been created to manufacture worker bees for a work force. They had simply stumbled into the machine and it did what it was programmed to do.

Once more, there was truth in the fact that a complete workup of Molly showed she had no enhancements. None. She was a perfectly normal, healthy child with mixed heritage. In her voice, and the meaningful glance Sarah gave him, he knew this part to be the God's honest truth. Inwardly, he let out a sigh of relief.

Fiction mixed with fact, Molly had been given memories to make her a more efficient creation. She didn't have to be taught the basics. She was ready for the world.

Sam decided to keep the scant information they had learned regarding the Borg to himself. They were a distant threat and he had already decided to write a Classified Report and submit it to Starfleet security. He couldn't help but wonder: *What would happen if those things really did try to invade the Alpha Quadrant in a hundred years or more?*

When Sarah finished her report Diana turned her attention to her Captain. "What's to become of Molly?" she asked, her eyes searching his and trying to see into his soul.

The answer was simple. "She's my daughter."

Diana nodded, as did the rest of the senior staff. Most of them were parents themselves.

As Sam stood to bring the meeting to a close Sarah raised one finger. “I would recommend we keep Molly's origin from her – at least for the time being. I don't think she's old enough to understand what's happened to her.”

Sam was in total agreement and looked around the table. He saw no dissenting expressions and nodded. “I think we're all on the same page. For now, nobody mentions it to her. Spread the word. Anyone who says anything will find themselves floating home.”

His people agreed with the sentiment. Regardless of her origins, Molly was a little girl who needed to be protected. It was a no-brainer.

Once the meeting was over Sam lingered behind to have a quiet word with Doctor McKenzie. “You lied for me?”

She squeezed his arm affectionately. “On further examination of your daughter I found that there was no real difference between her and any other child. Besides, the only other person who knows the truth about her is me, and as her family physician, I decided to invoke client confidentiality. Everyone deserves a chance to have the family they dream of.”

Sam smiled at his friend. It was a lovely sentiment. He had something of T'Mol, the love of his life, to keep her memory alive. Something of her would continue to live on. He considered a recent mission. “Commander Sullivan had a baby she didn't want, then lost it when she realized she did want him. By contrast I got my daughter I always

wanted, but never would have had the chance to have if her mother were around.” Sam sighed. “Can we go back to being explorers and not worry about coming back from missions with kids at our sides?”

Sarah laughed and shook her head. “I think we can.”

Molly liked reading in her new home, Sam's quarters, where the Quartermaster had installed a bunk bed. She found it strange that her father had no recollection of her and had shared his grief when he told her about the loss of her mother. Unlike her mother, though, she chose to embrace her human side and reveled in the emotions that came with them. She was old enough to remember going to Vulcan and seeing the towering statues of Surak, visiting her grandparents there.

She had no idea she was a recent construct – that her memories were fabrications - and nobody on the staff would tell her. Now she had to get used to being with her father, and she was determined to do that. Her memories were pretty true to his personality, but the truth was that Sam had never been a parent before. It was a steep learning curve.

Molly told her father all the memories she had of her mother and while she did quietly wept, feeling her loss even given her youth.

For Sam, having someone sharing in his grief was actually bringing him one step closer to getting over T'Mol.

“Are you going to send me back to Earth when we get home?” she asked him while she dried her eyes. It was a fear she was not ready to handle.

Sam considered. “I don’t think so, you wouldn’t exactly fit in there. But, you know I could always raise you here with me. The people here are nice and I would love to have you with me.” It was a strange thing to have her living with him, telling him of all these memories she had of him and T’Mol but it was also nice not to be alone for a change. It had been so long.

Captain's personal log. Stardate 2263.12. The Torrent has been assigned to transport colonists to a nearby planet. Meanwhile, I am getting used to my new daughter. It is like a piece of T'Mol has been given to me, and maybe I can move on. In a way, she has returned to me.

The End