



Chapter 1

Preface:

This Story takes place during the Four Years War and is centered around the Inverness 5 system AFTER the battle is lost by the Federation and the front lines have moved on. One point to make here is the use of Dimensional Shifter technology first mentioned in the TNG episode titled "High Ground".

S.D. 2243.7

The twelve dark figures were several hundred yards behind them, but the chest-rattling battle cries sounded like they were on top of the four running men. The deserted street, littered with burnt vehicles and huge chunks of the shattered towers, snaked a trail through the debris forcing the four men to follow it. They did their best to keep from tripping as the cries behind them grew closer. One of the four waved them towards a clearing that had once been a courtyard for three towers that were now just shells reaching up only five or six stories high. The wave, though, wasn't for their benefit, but to tip off the twelve behind them.

With a skidding turn, the four ran into the square surrounded by concrete mounds of tower walls. With the twelve figures momentarily out of sight, the four men dug spheres from their bags and tossed them. Each one arched towards its target, but suddenly hovered above the corners of the courtyard. Waiting just long enough to let the twelve dark figures see them, they ran out the far end. When the last of the four men passed out of the square, he triggered a switch and motioned to conceal themselves. The four men pulled out homemade concrete-gray gillie blankets and dropped to the ground.

The twelve figures saw the four men run with fear etched on their faces, and grinned. Almost in unison they roared and ran out of the shadows of the street into the sunlight, revealing themselves as Klingons. Before they got to the center of the square the floating spheres disappeared in a flash, and were replaced by four hovering rail Gatling guns. The gun sensors detected the Klingons, swiveled on target and filled the air with industrial transparent aluminum ball bearings traveling at over 3,200

kilometers per hour. The roars changed to short cries of pain that lasted five seconds then total silence. Flipping the trigger once again from his hiding place, the guns shut off, then vanished.

After an agonizing few more seconds, the four men crawled from their hiding spots to see carnage below. The few recognizable body parts made it obvious there had been someone standing there a moment before. The four men grimaced a few seconds longer then walked further into the skeleton of Inverness government tower. One man dug a spike from his bag and drove it into the ground, then looked at one of the others. "Alright Doctor Elway, you've convinced me. Your dimensional shifters will be a good weapon against our oh-so-benevolent new hosts there," he said while jabbing a thumb back at the meat pool in the square.

Pulling a hood off, Elway grinned back, "I've got a whole lot more where those came from commodore. Besides, it's going to be a while before the Federation will be able to get back here to rescue us, so my expertise is at your disposal."

The last two men came close and motioned to the Commodore that reinforcements were coming. "Time to go, Doc." He tapped out 'dash-dot-dot-dash' on the top of the staff. Within seconds the four men vanished in a shower of red atoms, then the staff began to overheat and melt down to slag. Before the reinforcements arrived the little residual dilithium energy used by the rail guns had dissipated. No evidence of any attackers would be found, other than the blood-soaked ball bearings.

On the far edge of the demolished loading docks of the city's space port the four men reappeared. The Commodore quickly located a concealed lever and started pumping it up and down. Under a nearby damaged overhang a door slowly slid open. As soon as the men could fit through they ducked inside. The commodore grabbed an interior lever and quickly pumped the door shut. A few seconds passed and an automated emergency light flickered on showing a set of stairs that they ran down to a waiting mining cargo car. On one end was a passenger cabin, they ducked into it. With a quick flick of the commands the car slid into an airlock, then through into the vacuum sealed fast tube. Looking back over his shoulder to make sure everyone was seated the Commodore hit the "Engage" button and the car quickly built up speed. Within seconds they were kilometers from the city traveling to the far side of the continent.

"PataQ!" Subordinates ducked as blood wine showered them from the thrown goblet. The newly appointed system governor grabbed the nearest one and body-slammed him into a nearby wall, buckling it and showering concrete dust on both. "How can a warrior, let alone twelve of them, be bested by four weak humans? Were they even federation soldiers?" Not waiting for an answer, Governor Uras threw the subordinate aside. "What happened to them?"

"They were shredded, your Excellency. With these." General Fangar held out what the governor at first thought were invisible balls stained with blood. Fangar could see the momentary confusion on his face. "It is transparent aluminum."

Uras picked one out of the generals hand and held it up to the light. "This little thing? This should not be a threat – so I ask again, how?"

"There were, at last count, well over 4000 of these found in and around the men of this squad." Fangar pulled out his PADD and tapped the screen. Holding it up to Uras, a digital image of the square appeared with dots concentrated on the center. "From what our scanners could surmise, the balls were fired in some manner from the four corners of the square. There was no residual power reading that would indicate weapons or Federation transporters. There was a slight nuclear vibration that I have never seen before, but have been told that it could be from the weapon they used. However, it was well below any signature I have ever seen for any kind of weapon."

"What started this?"

“Their commander received a radio message from the squad reporting sniper fire and spotting some humans running they gave chase. When the humans ran into a dead zone, the commander ordered the rest of his troops to go after the squad. It wasn’t long till they found what was left of them.”

“AAAHH!” the governor slammed his gloved fist on the nearby table that crumbled under his assault. “These federation types do not fight with honor. They will not face us and fight. Instead we are doomed to be picked off kellicam by kellicam. I have had enough. Sto’vo’kor has been warned too many times lately and with this latest attack I am told there weren’t even any eyes left to open upon their deaths. They will never be greeted for their great deeds of combat.”

“I agree. This last attack was different. I cannot help but think this was their version of the strategy of least respect.”

After a moment’s thought the governor grinned and dropped to his command chair, “Then let us do the same.” He flipped a switch on his armrest and barked, “Give me my fleet commander!”



Chapter 2

The western province of Inverness I was a wasteland. The closest description of it was high plains desert. Cutting through it was the Graderson Range, a long gash of mountains and deep valleys. The Federation colony had not spread to this region yet so it was mostly uninhabited. A few towns had sprouted to mine the veins of dilithium that had brought the Federation to begin with. The heavier deposits were many kilometers to the north, but still, there was enough through that western range to draw out the more independent prospectors.

The Klingons garrisoned the few towns there, but saw it as a wasteland. So much so that after the battle for Inverness, floating debris of the destroyed ships was pushed out of orbit to crash there without any regard for the few colonists that lived there. Most of the hull fragments landed in the mountain range and abandoned. This was the gift the colonist needed. Two of hulls were Klingon and between them the colonists were able to get one partial, working computer core.

For months, the insurgent colonists stripped those hulls and their leftover tech to build a network of command and control facilities connected through tunnels. Tech and supplies had been secretly moved to the caves in the area during the orbital battles and it was a miracle that none of it was lost when the ships came crashing down. Still, some of the colonists were obliterated and sentiment for the Klingons was nonexistent.

The local miners quickly expanded the network of natural tunnels to connect to the federation fast tubes, used to transport personnel and mined dilithium to the main processing facilities close in to the cities. These tunnels now helped the colonists to escape the Klingons and to fight them. A surprising benefit was the discovery of huge new deposits of dilithium and iron within that network. They weren't enough to rival the northern deposits, but enough to supply their own needs for years to come.

To avoid detection, all the weapons were old-fashioned rail guns, chemical bombs and, after the successful test, dimensional shifters, or DMs. The new-found dilithium powered it all. The colonists were now ready to fight the Klingons head-to-head, ...almost.

In a cavern under one of the cracked federation lower hulls Doctor Darius Elway toiled at a new design for an automated mortar equipped with a DM unit. Bora'k, a young Andorian, tried to keep up with Elway's quick chatter of ideas on the PADD he was scribbling on. "So, if we set this up to home in on the sounds of the Klingon disruptors ... ooo ... and their own unique vocalizations, we can have a low-power system to zero in on them with no *active* signal that they can detect." Dr. Elway paused for a moment to point absentmindedly at the air. "Yes, Yes, that would work." He stopped to lean over his

computer console and typed in some commands. A stream of equations scrolled up the screen as he followed them with one finger.

The Andorian looked pensive for a moment then his eyes lit up. "Sir, I believe something similar was used in Earth's past." He typed in a search on his PADD and, a moment later with a smile, he held it up for the doctor to see. "For both military and police work."

Squinting at it, Doctor Elway read out loud, "Strategically placed audio sensors to detect weapons fire and in the military, it was tied to mortars. Perfect Bora'k! Send me that link to read." A communicator on the table chirped. With a flip, he opened it up. "Doctor Elway here."

"Gunar wants you in the conference room ASAP. The ridge heads are planning something big."

The doctor shut off the computer in front of him. "I figured they would after yesterday's ambush. I'll be right up." He smiled and said, "I'll look over the material you found. Who knows, it may be just what this doctor ordered."

Bora'k smiled back, "In the meantime, I'll head to the factory floor and look over the new personal DMs."

With a fatherly pat on Bora'k's shoulder, Elway turned and walked down a tunnel barely wide enough for him to walk in due to hastily laid conduits. At a turn he stepped into a waiting cage, lowered a retaining bar and flipped the power bar to 'up.' The cage lurched, forcing him to grab a retaining bar as he rose into the fuselage on the surface.

Enough power had been restored for the lighting and doors to work. With no need for life support, vents were drilled into the hull to let in air. Still, the ducts were used with fans to force air throughout the hull. Since the hull had landed on a high ridge of Mount Craggs, the air had a sharp chill and everyone wore coats. Colonists were working everywhere to install insulation in the usable areas of the hull. Until that was done the ships heaters were offline to prevent any heat from radiating out, giving the Klingon ships in orbit a target to identify. The abundance of dilithium within the range masked the low power signatures being used, but crews were working diligently to install energy scramblers there too.

Several colonial officials walked down the same corridor with the doctor, every once in a while greeting someone as they worked. Senator Morgan sidled close to Elway and whispered, "I hear the test went well, Darius. Maybe too well."

The doctor swallowed the mental image of the carnage he had seen. "Totally necessary as far as I see it," Elway replied. "They outnumber us 100 to 1, and the guerrilla warfare is only ticking them off."

"And this attack may have put them over the edge. I have been reading some of the translated communications. They are planning something big now. The only saving grace is they have no idea what we used against them."

"Those DMs will keep them guessing forever."

"And if they get their hands on one of them?"

"I rigged a nasty surprise. The second they put their hands on them the sensors are set to explode with enough force to pulverize anything within a square meter."

As the two neared the conference room a guard nodded at them and triggered the door, which slid open slowly. Once inside, the guard in the hall pressed the button to shut them in. This room had been one of the ships rec/cafeteria rooms. Now a circle of tables and chairs filled the room. On one wall was a reclaimed main viewer. Multiple images scrolled by. As soon as everyone was seated Starfleet Commodore Gunar stood up. "This will be brief and brutal ladies and gentlemen." Everyone quieted down. "As you all know the test ambush yesterday was a success. All due to the new weapons, the lack of loss for us and total destruction of those Klingons who fell into the trap. But, as we all knew, whether we failed or succeeded, we forced them to acknowledge us as true adversaries. The fight is

coming to us now in full force, however not as we had predicted.” He paused to bring up an orbital schematic. Several Klingon ships were in orbit above them. “Now, this is not what we normally see. The ships stationed here generally maintain a perimeter out at the edges of the system with an occasional visit by one or two for shore leave or what not. Now, as you can see, there are three or four ships stationed in orbit around all five of the populated planets. Since we were able to tap their comms using the recovered Klingon equipment, we know exactly what they are planning to do.” He looked to the Federation News subspace tech to his right. “Read the orders we’ve translated.”

A skinny, long-haired man stood up holding his PADD. “By order of the supreme governor, all ships are to amass in-system to receive primary targets for execution of justice for the cowardly attack on warriors of the Empire.” The young man swallowed and sat down.

“It goes on to give ship assignments to specific targets. From our scouts in those areas mentioned they have reported the civilians being rounded up in one-block areas of every city of the five planets. They intend to wipe those targets off the maps completely.” Everyone in the room started to murmur. Holding up his hands they quieted down again. “They intend to do this in two days. What people we could, we have evacuated back here, but we can’t do much without drawing attention. I am looking for any ideas to get more out.”

Several ideas from outright attacks to daring rescues through the Fast Tubes flew back and forth. In the middle of the crowd Darius mulled over a seed of an idea till he smiled and stood up. “I have it,” he yelled.

“And what is that, doctor?” The commodore asked.

“We can use scaled-up DMs to get them out in seconds.”

“But I thought you said they are deadly for any living being to use.”

“Yes, but only with repeated use. A single mass move of people will have negligible effect on them.”

“But won’t that tip our hand?”

He thought for a moment then answered, “Not if we time it to happen milliseconds before the disruptor fire hits those targets.”

“Can we get the DMs to the sites in time?”

“How much time do we have?”

“Thirty-nine hours.”

Darius smiled, “I can get them to you in twelve, you can arrange to get them in place before then.”

“It will be tight, especially beaming them to all these sites piggybacked on the Klingons subspace lines, but yes we can do that. Doctor, you and anyone you need get out of here and get that done – the rest of us here need to get the message out and the people in place to get this done.”

Darius pointed to several people and they followed him out.

“The object of this particular game is to keep the Klingons completely in the dark.” The doctor talked to the screen as he frantically brought up a sensor program for all the new DMs they were manufacturing. “This sensor program will be completely passive, using mathematics and optics to determine the timing of the triggers.”

“Are you sure this will work?” Bora’k looked worried.

“Of course it will. I studied the disruptor schematics from the crashed Klingon ships.” The doctor chuckled a bit. “They hold us in such low esteem that they broadcast with little encryption and have none on their ships’ computer core. I was able to copy it all - ship and weapons schematics, current and future transmission codes. Heck even the little medical data they keep will help us out.” He walked over to the large hovering sphere, cables snaking out to his computer, and tapped it. “This DM will be able to detect the disruptor fire from orbit. With the intel we have on those weapons we know exactly

how long, down to the microsecond, it will take to hit its target. All we need is a millisecond or two to shift all those trapped people out.”

“I thought they worked only for objects they are touching. How can these shift out thousands?”

“They will shift anything within a certain radius, not by touch. I’ve rigged these to work in tandem sets of three or four together creating a bubble. Anything inside that set will shift.”

“The buildings too?”

“Oh, no. I have calibrated them to shift organics only for this mission. I can reprogram them to do more though.” The large sphere beeped at them. “OK, the prototype’s done.” He walked back to the computer screen and scrolled through the simulation results. “Perfect, now download this to the rest.”

Bora’k tapped in a command on his PADD. The internal indicator lights started flashing on the mass of hovering spheres in the cavern. “They will be ready in a couple of minutes, sir.”

Darius looked over at one of the other workers in the room, “Let the commodore know we will be ready to beam these out within a half hour.”



Chapter 3

Morale was high on the *Bloody Targ*. Stationed in orbit above the Federation capital city of Inverness 1 they would be the primary ship delivering justice on this mission. Theirs was the shot that would be broadcast to Qo'nos. The men and women walked the corridors with purpose, wearing the appropriate scowls of pride. On the bridge, conversation was forbidden save for any commands or responses given.

A light flashed on the captain's armrest. Punching it with his fist he growled, "This is Captain Rokol."

General Fangar appeared on the forward screen. "By command of the governor you are ordered to serve our vengeance."

"Understood general." With a nod to his comms officer the screen switched to the forward orbital view. The captain leaned back and looked over his shoulder. "Don't waste my time. Fire on our designated target."

Without ceremony, the weapons officer entered the command. A single disruptor blast shot towards the planets surface. From the view screen other lances of light shot downwards. The captain bellowed in triumph and was quickly followed by the rest of crew. Flashes of light followed by quickly rising debris clouds brought some of the crew to their feet as the yells of justice filled the ship as well as the subspace broadcasts.

To save time, many colonists volunteered to shift to their assigned targets rather than using the Piggybacked Klingon subspace signals to beam there. Shifting back out was possible, but now they would all wear stripe patches on their shoulders to indicate how many times they had used the DMs themselves. The Doctor had come up with a safety margin of 10 shifts before feeling the affects and 20 was the limit. Any more and agonizing death was certain after months of pain.

With two hours to spare, all the DMs were in place and the trapped civilians pulled back behind the new cordons. Bora'k had volunteered to be one of the rescuers and was in place in Central City. Now with minutes left Doctor Elway paced the edges of the cavern set aside for the incoming colonists. He'd refused to be in the conference room to watch the attack from there. After all, this cavern was where he would see that his idea succeeded or failed. Having all those civilians in the line of fire ate at his gut

but not as much as knowing his assistant was there too. At moments like these his bravado and confidence laid exposed as just a front.

His communicator beeped and he quickly fumbled it open, "Elway here."

The garbled voice of Bora'k came out in a whisper, "One last call to tell you, doctor, we are all nervous, but ready."

"Hell, Bora'k what are you doing? Get off the line! We don't want the Ridge Heads to figure this out."

His assistant continued, "Don't worry, sir, I am on a secure line. I'd just finished getting an update to command and asked to be transferred to you. I just wanted to tell you if this doesn't work, then it has been an..."

The line cut off and Darius feared the worse but a sudden flash of light and 400 people were suddenly standing in front of him. "...honor to serve," came from his communicator and in the chamber near the young Andorian. Within seconds more colonist flashed into the cavern and were quickly ushered to the surrounding tunnels.

Darius ran up to his assistant and gave him a bear hug as people streamed around them. "It's been an honor for me too," he said over Bora'k's shoulder.

Beyond the Inverness system laid an asteroid belt. A burgeoning mining operation had begun just a couple of years before the war came their way. As luck would have it, the main facility was situated on the far side of the system from where the Klingon's had sprung their battles to take it. Most of the crew had enough time to bug out to the next Federation world at warp one before the fight came to them.

Before leaving though, they booby-trapped the main facility. When the Klingons finally arrived, the facility and one Bird-of-Prey became the newest, ever expanding, additions to the belt.

Bronson, the only remaining belter, watched the small victory from his habitat on one of the larger asteroids. He'd always been a loner, most beltlers were, but he insisted on staying behind to monitor them and work on a way to get information to the Federation. In the rush to set up he'd only had time to anchor it into the rock and make sure that the air supply would last long enough for him to do the manual work to keep him alive. Every ounce of food the miners could spare had been locked down next to his new home. Within a week he had tapped the asteroids ice, enough for water and oxygen. It took him several weeks more to setup the solar panels. Lowering their reflective albedo to stay hidden meant three times the coverage was needed. To conserve energy till it was all set he lowered the habitats' temperature to just above freezing. The remaining energy collected went to convert ice to oxygen and hydrogen for life support. A month after the battle for Inverness V, Bronson sported a heavy beard and shivered from head to toe, even in his insulated environment suit. His joints ached and his skin itched but he dared not get out of the suit the entire time. *Thank God no one is here to smell me*, he thought as he stared at the mirror in the wash closet. Two months past before the panels had collected enough to kick the habitats' systems to full power. To celebrate he set the shower in the water closet to steam and sat for three hours in the wonderful hot, humid closet.

Once his survival was settled, he had gotten to work setting up the *borrowed* mining facility's computer core to a network of subspace transmitters and receivers that had taken him two more months to setup. It was six months after his move before they were gathering Intel. Four months later he discovered the hidden transmissions and transports from the colonists and nearly knocked himself out jumping for joy inside his low gravity home. After a week of debating himself, he'd decided to not contact them yet. "Best save that for when I think they need me most," he said to his reflection on the wall.

Still he racked his brain for ideas to go and help them. From the broadcasts he'd intercepted he could tell the resistance was slowly ratcheting up and they were being successful, for the most part. Then came the day he listened in on the Klingon's vengeance attack on thousands of innocent men, women and children. From his sensors he watched as they fired from orbit to wipe them out. Smashing his fists on the console sent him floating up, and in a rage, he flailed about in midair as he slowly descended again.

"Those GOD damned BASTARDS!" he yelled as he grabbed at a handhold to right himself. Walking on Velcro quickly to another station he pulled up the segregated resistance channel and read intently. What scrolled across the screen at first confused him. They, at least, had been smart enough to develop a code, but it was an ancient one, Morse code. He quietly read the translation on the screen. "Why don't they sound angry or upset," he said to his left shoulder. "They seem to be in the middle of a system-wide operation, but it sounds like it's going as planned." The Klingons were bellowing on the subspace lines in triumph behind him. He reached over and muted it so he could concentrate on the words in front of him.

He read, "Region one, all souls are secure ... region ten, all souls secure." It went on and on with one *region* after another. Finally they stopped and a new message scrolled by. "All souls secure -stop- RH none the wiser -stop.'" He knew RH were the Klingons. He reread the entire transmission four more times till he gasped then laughed. "I don't know how they did that but I think they rescued everyone without tipping off the ridge heads," he said to his right shoulder. His mind raced and he felt like dancing so he pushed off the floor and pulled into a tight ball causing his centrifugal force to somersault himself quickly in midair till the light gravity pulled him down. He whooped and laughed, literally bouncing off the walls for several minutes.

When he finally calmed down a thought came to him. "We've GOT to help them out somehow." Sending a transmission, even embedded the way the colonists had, from the far edge of the belt would catch the attention of the Klingons. Sitting there, quietly tapping his head with both fists he tried to think of a way. Outside the nearby portal, several thousand kilometers away, the remnants of the Bird-of-Prey and the facility spun lazily. They sparkled in the light of the distant sun. It was usually an ignored scene, but today it caught his eye. "The ridge heads are in-system," he said with a smile. Getting up and walking as fast as he could to the airlock, Bronson stopped at the entrance to the water closet and pointed at himself in the mirror, "IN-SYSTEM. Perfect."

Pressure suit on and out on the surface twenty minutes later, he bounded to an overhang in the crater wall that hid his habitat. When he reached it he slowed, then stepped close to the wall and grabbed it. It fluttered and gave way in his hands. The camouflage curtain hid a bright yellow Work Bee. Having been used by the mining company had left it well worn and battered, but still functional. A tap on the external panel woke it up and the forward canopy opened. Ten minutes later he flew the bee out, cargo tub attached underneath and swung it towards the nearby wreckage.



Chapter 4

S.D. 2244.7

Losses amongst the colonists were mounting. More often, the resistance fighters resorted to using the DMs to fight this guerrilla war more efficiently. More and more colonists were beamed to the growing network of caves and tunnels under the Graderson Range on Inverness 1. Once there and trained they often used the Shifters to wreak havoc on the Klingons. The efficiency and range of the DMs under Elway's constant tinkering had made the need for colonists on all the planets of the system unnecessary. Over four months they played a game of deceit with the Klingons to make them believe they had killed off all the colonists on all but this one planet and they kept the visible numbers very low to avoid open conflict. As they pulled back from the outer planets they pilfered any tech they could get there hands on including an Antimatter converter. This battle for the system had purposely changed from open resistance to physiological warfare. However, using the DMs had its affect on the fighters.

Cristy Hunt entered the newly dug medical cavern. Row upon row of cots filled the space. She grabbed a PADD off to one side of the entrance and switched it on. Hundreds of people groaned, tossing and turning in the cots. At this end of the cavern were the recently admitted patients. They were referred to as the "twenties." She ignored them. Most of them sat there staring at the ceiling or trying to sleep. Her station was with the "Thirties". The fighters who had shifted beyond the deadly 20 shifts. These were the martyrs. They had volunteered to continue shifting past the deadly mark knowing that they were going to die anyway. Often when they went out it was a suicide mission.

"Good evening Griz," she said as she neared a desk with a terminal.

Doctor Griznek looked up and smiled. "And good evening to you too Nurse Hunt."

"Anything new for me to be aware of?" She synced the PADD to the terminal and a list of names of patients scrolled by.

"We've lost two more this morning. Their lungs just stopped working. And there will be eight more heading out tonight on a raid. Give them anything they want for the pain. They won't be back."

Cristy frowned. "Another specter raid?" The Doctor nodded. The psi ops guys had come up with the idea of using the terminal fighters to suit up like Zombie Klingons to appear and run directly towards enemy patrols, detonating themselves when they came into range. It was always voluntary to go on these raids, but to these dying men and woman it meant killing their enemies. Nurse Hunt suppressed a shudder and said, "certainly."

"I know you want to save lives, but this is a brutal fight with a brutal enemy. Everything we do is to unbalance the Ridge Heads. Like one of your own Earth's nation state intelligence organizations motto's went, *By way of deception, thou shalt do war*. Besides, for everyone in this room there is nothing left. They will all be dead in time."

"Of course, I understand that."

"So, we do what we can to ease their pain and help them in their wish to die fighting, not writhing in agony."

Nurse Hunt pulled up the list of volunteers and read through their charts quickly. She grabbed several vials of medicine and wiped her damp eyes before stepping away.

Even on the four planets that had been evacuated the Klingons feared walking anywhere in the open. The specter raids were, obviously, to unhinge them but also to plant as many DM anchors as possible. Elway purposely programmed the DMs not to bypass shielded buildings even though the Dimensional Shifters could go anywhere. This lulled their enemy into thinking they were safe behind them.

For now, though, the resistance sowed the seeds of the Klingons worst fears. First the automated weapons were deployed. Then automated sign painters with DMs spread out through the five planets spray painting the moniker "Fek'lhrs' Domain." Scarecrow effigy's of Klingon Warriors with X's for eyes seemed to popup everywhere as well as the Spectre raids. A new Department was setup to scour the Klingon data base for any weaknesses. One entry they found seemed to be ridiculous. Bora'k showed it to the Doctor. "Sir, this cataloged 'enemy' of the Empire seems silly." Handing the pad over he waited for Darius to read it.

"A Ylh, hmm. Says here that more than half their biology is dedicated to asexual reproduction." He read a little further then continued, "If left unchecked one of these can multiply into over one million in less than four days." He pulled up the cataloged images of this creatures. A series of small round balls of fur in various patterns scrolled by. "They certainly don't seem dangerous since they're herbivores but if those numbers are correct something like this would wipe out a planet's ecology very quickly. I can see why there would be a concern, but an enemy of the empire? That's a bit drastic, however, knowing them that wouldn't surprise me." He handed the pad back. "Never seen one before. Properly neutered they would be great pets. Why show me this?"

"The guys in psi ops were wondering if there was a way to use this."

"Don't see how since there are none here. Besides, I don't think the bastards would have kept a DNA sample of them let alone letting any onto their ships." He stood up tall with a scowl on his face and pounded his chest. "It would be dishonorable to allow one to live one second in my sight," he growled, attempting to imitate a Klingon. They both broke out laughing.

"I would love to see the face of one of them if they find one," Bora'k chuckled.

A sudden light went off in the Doctor's mind and he smiled, "maybe we can. The Ylhs and something else I read from psi ops. They have a botanist down there that loves music and found some Klingon opera. Sounds like screeching owls to me but he found a few songs like 'The Dishonored Dead' and 'Cowards Way'. The botanist, um.. oh yeah, Rolson's his name. He found a way to manipulate the whistle vines to play specific tunes. Come on!" He grabbed his assistant and led him off to the food prep cavern.

"Get on with it you blHnuch I want to get back to the barracks before any of those Fek'lhr possessed traps appear." Bek Klar jabbed at the other Bek ahead of him.

Bek Torath held up his scanner and shuffled forward uncertain. The abandoned residential quarter was getting overgrown with the native whistle vines. Most of the houses were crumbling under a carpet of the purple broad leaves and the wind blowing through the hollow stems filled the air with a wary music. "I tell you I am detecting something new here." His scanner displayed small life signs. Thinking that he'd found a colonist hiding he was determined to capture and drag the wretch to his commander for interrogation. As they neared the site Torath puzzled at the readings. "This must be a small one," he said showing the screen to his partner. A quick thought of a dishonored wraith being behind that wall stalled him until Klar jabbed him again.

"Who cares, let's be done with this and get back." A steady breeze came from the crumbled mound of a home in front of them. The harmonic notes of the whistle vines seemed to change. Klar froze, "is that much mlw, the 'Cowards Way' from the opera 'The Lost Battle?'"

Torath cocked his head, but the breeze had stopped. He squinted over his shoulder at Klar in frustration. "He's hiding behind that wall," he whispered. With a signal to charge they both ran through an open doorway screaming, but fell over each other in a tangle when Torath suddenly recoiled. There, on the ground just an arms reach from them was a mound of cuing balls of fur. When Klar saw them he spat and shoved Torath into the dirt to get away from the now screeching balls. When both reached the threshold of the door then stopped to scowl down at the Ylh. The mound seemed to grow and more crawled up to the top.

"Another curse is upon us," growled Klar. Knowing the spectral weapons seemed to appear any time a disruptor was fired he pulled his Bat'leth from its sheath on his back. "We must dispatch these vermin and report this immediately" Torath drew his Daqtagh and started to spring the secondary guard blades, but both froze at the sight of a red fog seeping out from the mass of fur. At first they did not move, they knew this was not something the Ylh did, but the past few months taught them to be cautious. When the fog filled the air around them their lungs suddenly burned and they quickly backed off coughing and retching out their stomachs. The fog kept expanding fed by a bellows of wind. Now the music was unmistakable. 'The Cowards Way' moaned from vines all around them and they visibly shook. With unsaid fear the two warriors ran back to their barracks. Across the five planets the red fog and cursed music sprouted everywhere, causing panic system wide. When the governor finally sent men back out with breather masks no evidence was found of the hated pests, except some blackened dead whistle vines.



Chapter 5

S.D. 2244.9

Within two months the Klingons had backed off any patrols in small groups in the open. The red fog held them back for a short time till they ventured out with the masks. Doctor Elway had anticipated this and instituted a programmed change from the bio engineered pepper gas to blister gas. It had no affect on anyone but the Klingons. After a while a third version started appearing dispensing fog that settled as red dust on the ground. Anyone walking through the area would kick it up with the same affects.

Soon the five planets started taking on a dark red hue that could be seen from orbit. The phrase “Iw HIq yuQ ghe'or” was intercepted over the orbiting ships subspace transmissions. When the computers spat out the Federation Standard translation the psi ops department printed a large banner to hang that read “The Blood Wine Planets of Hell!” Not wanting to waste the new title, the sign painters started leaving the phrase graffitied along with more Ylh red fog bombs, Eyeless Ridge Head Scarecrows, whistle vine manipulators and thousands of the DM weapons. The city’s were systematically being reduced to a rolling field of large purple leaf covered concrete rubble, save for the untouched Klingon operating bases at their centers.

“So, did you see the latest Starfleet communique?”

Darius looked up to Bora’k. “Yep, Three systems regained in 30 days, but that’s old news.”

“I Know, but that puts Starfleet just a few systems away. It also means that the battle front is close with more ridge head ships closer.”

“And your point?”

His assistant handed him the PADD he was carrying. The Doctor read the recent sensor readings stolen from the ships in orbit. After a moment he raised an eyebrow. “This can’t be right. Those ships outside the system are almost twice the size of the D6.”

“We’ve confirmed it with the miner out in the belt. He’s even gotten some visuals.” Bor’ak reached over and tapped a command. On the screen a cluster of twenty ships appeared moving past the system at sublight speeds. Five of the ships dwarfed the others. “They were orbiting one of the captured ‘K’ stations that has been towed there. We believe they are using the station as a command center for the war.”

"I need to scour the Klingon computer core for any info on this ship. See if we can pass along any info to Starfleet."

"Well, without it our own intel department surmises that they have the same basic shape of the D6 as this D7, we're calling it, so they should have the same general layout. Really, we currently don't have a clue. Anyway, If they come here the DMs still have the advantage over them and we can take them out too."

Darius smiled at Bora's confidence, but a new idea came to mind. Pulling up a manifest of the scavenged material the belter had, the Doctor found what he needed and said, "I have to get to comms and talk to Bronson. I think I have a way to get that intel."

With such a long distance to beam out to the Asteroid habitat the doctor stood on the transport pad a good minute and a half before the system kicked in. His transport signal was rerouted nine times before he appeared inside the lower level of the belters home a full forty two seconds later. His stomach leapt as if he was riding down a roller coaster. Bronson grabbed his shoulder, holding Darius down. "Take slow even breaths Doc, till you settle. I'm not using any grav plating here. Uses too much energy. And, that is a power signature that the Ridge Heads can detect. Here." The belter handed Darius a pair of thin velcro boots. "Put these on and you'll be able to walk normally."

After a few uneasy minutes, feeling as if he was going to fall over, Darius got the boots on and stood up. He still felt light headed, but with the boots on and the one quarter standard gravity of the asteroid he finally felt steady. He smiled and stuck out his hand. "Nice to finally meet you Mr. Craiger."

Bronson engulfed the proffered hand in his and said, "My friends call me Brat as in Bratwurst." he almost shook the Doctor off the floor.

A moment later the room filled again with a shower of red atoms where Darius had been standing. "Ah, here are our supplies." Seven barrels appeared. "We've taken the liberty of including some fresh food for you. All vacuum sealed, but it has to be better than what you've been living on. That barrel over there in green." The belter grabbed one of the barrels handles and lifted it over his shoulder as if it was riding on anti grav sleds. With three bounds he was up the steep stairs to the second level and out of sight. With a chuckle the Doctor followed him in two bounds.

"So Doc what was so important that you had to come all the way out here?" Bronson was over by a storage closet in the galley putting the barrel down like it was a small reader pad.

"I looked over your scavenged Klingon tech and I believe we can use some of it to get a full scan of those new battleships the Ridge Heads seem to be massing nearby."

"Yeah, how?" Bronson grabbed a water bladder from chiller unit and held it up to Darius who nodded yes. He flicked it with no energy and it sailed slowly across the room.

With a lazy grab Darius said, "thanks." A tube popped up and he took a long sip of the cold water. He sighed then said, "I see on that list several undamaged deep space probes and a couple of them are KL433 class with built in stealth."

"Yep, I planned on handing them over to Starfleet intel when this system is retaken."

"Good thought, but we need that info on the 'D7's out there more and if we can get it without them knowing, all the better."

"I would think you'd need just one of them for that. I get the feeling you want to use them both."

Darius smiled. "You got it. One for this covert op and both to seed the entire sector with dormant DM anchors." Bronson gave him a quizzical look. "The last Starfleet communique hints at a massive punch and we're on the Klingons highway to the front. We've devised a way to lay an unseen mine field that we can spring when the ball drops." He handed him a pad with a sector map. Live time readings of every ship moved across the screen. "Tap that app to the side there." Doctor Elway pointed to an Icon of a Klingon head with 'X's for eyes. With a tap several thousand white dots appeared. "We have full

over watch right now of the local subspace net and our own intel people have cracked the codes they are using. We'll know when to spring the trap."

Bronson let out a whistle and handed the PADD back. "Won't that tip our hand to them?"

"This is the skinny of it and what I am about to tell you means if they get through to you here you'll need to go down fighting with this to keep them from capturing you alive." Darius pulled a slim circuit board and handed it over. "Attach this to the matter/antimatter pod we've beamed here in one of those barrels." Pulling out a small communicator and handing that over as well he continued, "this is the trigger. The pod is small but more than enough to turn this rock into dust."

With a straight face Bronson stuffed both into a pocket and nodded. "Hope it doesn't come to that. However, something tells me you've thought this fight through a bit further."

Darius smiled. "Let's just say that map you saw only shows the X and Y axis."

The probe approached the D7 "Wo' Pach" unseen and parked itself behind some interstellar debris. Its sensors checked to make sure it was hidden. Since it had already scanned the ship the probes computer had pick a location to dispatch the DM equipped infiltration pod. The resistance intel guys that designed it to look like a piece of Klingon tech so it could hide in plain sight. It flashed into an empty room and quickly floated back to the wall to do a quick scan for life signs. Satisfied, it floated to a nearby computer terminal and plugged in. The pod quickly identified all the information it could access with out tripping any alarms and started recording. Within a minute it detected an internal alarm being tripped. A security power surge flashed to the port it was plugged to, but it had disengaged already. The life signs scanners warned of approaching Klingons and the pod shifted back out to appear next to the probe. An access hatch opened and the pod floated in and locked itself inside. Within seconds the probes' stealth tech kicked in and it set a return course to the Inverness system. As it traveled back DM anchors five Centimeters in diameter shot out at preprogrammed locations.

At the end of a week the entire sector swarmed with the unseen mine field. There was no place within a parsec that could not be reached by DM powered mines. Back at the now massive underground complex on Inverness 1 the factory floor was filling up to the ceiling with the mines. No one had to move them since they were tied to the anchors and could be deployed in a flash. Doctor Elway designed the anchors to home in on the Klingon engine signatures. When active the anchors could deliver the mines "inside" the ships, near the engines. The antimatter mines were small but that was the point, small enough to fit in the confined spaces inside a ship and the yield was enough to destroy the ship in one blow.

Once the probe returned to Bronson's' habitat the pilfered intel was transmitted to Starfleet and beamed to the Inverness resistance Intel department. What they saw concerned them. The Klingons appeared to have learned a bit from fighting the Federation and were slowly adapting their ships, weapons, computers and comms security. Half the information they downloaded had been firewalled and it took several weeks to breakdown. Some adjustments had to be transmitted out to the anchors to be able to tell the difference between the D7 and all the other ships.

The captain of the Wo'Pach scowled at the screen. 'I will not let him see me squirm,' he thought. Supreme Commander Kharn stared back at him. With a sigh Captain RH' kol said through his teeth, "nothing and no one was found in the computer core services room. My science officer can only confirm a slight nuclear vibration in the room. He is currently trying to trace the source but the ships plasma conduits do pass through that area. He tells me it appears that the radiation from those conduits have degraded the memory circuits causing the terminal to fail."

Kharn tilted his head and stared a moment longer. “There appears to be a lot of errant radiation passing through that entire region. Tell me HoD, can you tell what information was accessed when that terminal failed?” Kharn’s head appeared to grow on the screen and RH’kol barely suppressed a flinch.

“No,” he growled. “The terminal was severely wiped when the power surge hit it. The protocol was to pass that power surge through to whatever or whoever connected to it. Since there was nothing there there was nowhere for it to go ... so it self destructed.” He finished the statement mimicking an explosion with one hand.

After a moment Kharn appeared to relax a bit and leaned back. “It would appear that the ship builders are working a bit too hastily. I have had some reports of equipment failures on these new ships, but this is the first I have heard of a failure causing a security breach.”

The Captain seized on that thought. He sat straight and thrust a fist out. “My engineer assures me the new shielding he is putting around the plasma conduits will prevent that from happening again. I have the crew scouring the ship now for any other flaws. I am certain we will be ready for battle when the time comes.”

“See to that RH’kol. We must be ready for the final blow.” Without waiting the connection to the Wo’ Pach was cut.

The Captain spit on the deck and whispered, “’eDjen je.” One of the bridge crew flinched at the insult and turned his back to hide his surprise. It didn’t go unnoticed though. The captain stuck his chest and chin out and looked at the scrolling data on the main viewer trying to act the part of a confident leader. A closeup of the nearby system zoomed in as a convoy of Imperial ships passed through it, headed toward the Station he was currently defending. The dark red planets seemed to taunt him. ‘Damned Fe’klhrs’ Domain,’ he thought and a shiver traveled down his spine.