

A New Assignment For Old Targs

11/17/12

STRIKE GROUP LOG: STARDATE 51559.1

The bright room devoid of conduits and wires, lit by the multi-wave length illumination reflecting off of the clean white walls and ever-shine floors. Plasticine windows looking out a wide porthole into the darkness of space. Leather padded seats with high backs and a backlit blue glass podium.

This was the furthestest place from that room as possible. On Station Deep Space 12. The ready-room of the 49th Marine Strike Group the 'Fallen Angles of Mercy' was JUST the opposite of the kind of place you would find on a Star Ship or a Station built within the last 50 standard years. DS-12 was old twice as old as that, it had been in service for a very long time. But Lieutenant Colonel Kered Nella would not have it any other way. So old was the station that it could be used as a training platform for his Special Ops team. Colonel Nella had some of the best Marines in the Corps in his Strike Group.

From the outside what looked like a sad excuse for a space station was in face the perfect chameleon, inside DS-12 had some of the state of the art Holodecks for training and briefing seasons. Phaser and projectile weapons ranges, with labs for creating explosives that had extra strength containment fields. The hanger bays were large enough to accommodate the types of ships they would be using, including the Platoon's AMC transport the VMT Temjan (Aerospace craft designate V=Staff, M=Special Ops, T=Transport) when it arrived. Yet The 49th was not the only Marine Strike Group using the facility. Those companies did not like to be unduly bothered any more than 'The Fallen Angles' did. You came to DS-12 you did so to get work done, to sweat, bleed and make the plans that would make your enemies fear you whenever they even hear your name.

The Ready-room could seat 40, the chairs looked like they may have been comfortable once upon a time, but these men and women did not care about comfort, they would not be here if they wanted to sit on feathers surrounded by leather. The sliding door from the Colonel's office slid noisily open.

"Attention on Deck!" shouted Gunnery Sargent Tapua. And the 26 members of the team stood and came to attention.

Two of the three officers came through the door and stood to either side of the opening, and then the Klingon came striding into the room. His 195cm were muscular and hard, his steel grey hair flowed over his shoulders in thin dreadlocks, and his dark brown eyes had tiny lines on the skin next to them. The hardness of those eyes though did not let you believe that those lines came from humor or laughing. Lieutenant Colonel Kered Nella of the SFMC came to attention in front of the old thermoplast podium. Looking at his platoon standing there at attention his gaze fell upon each one of his warriors. The Klingon gave a slight nod, and Lieutenant Brando turned from her post at the door and faced the assembled platoon.

"Platoon, As you Were!" shouted Lt. Brando. Then she returned to her position at the door.

Then there was a deep growl that sounded like a large man walking on gravel. This was the voice of the Klingon as he addressed the Marines of the Forty Ninth.

"Groundbeasts", the word rumbled through the room like a thunderhead, "StarFleet has come looking for its Targh again, what do we say to that?"

The sound of angry Targh filled the room with a loud "ggrrraah!!! ggrrraah!!! ggrrahhh!!!"

"These are our Groundbeasts, R'rraaww", said Nella over his shoulder to his Deputy Officer in Charge, "Angles this is your briefing! Attend, The USS Golden Gate has requested assistance from our dear ol' Corps. We will be escorting three officials to what seems to be a Big Flappin' Deal conference at coordinates Zero, Zero, Zero, One..... Earth!"

At that there was a small but brief murmur, the Marines in the room knew that the Colonel disliked being interrupted during his briefings to them their attention had to be on what he was saying, he did not like to repeat himself. The general tone was favorable though, none of them had ever been to the center of galactic history for the organization they served. It was exciting to the Marines when they realized they would soon be there. The briefing continued with no more than a heartbeat.

"You had better be wondering why they won't be using their own Special Warfare Groups for this, they are trained for diplomatic assignments as you

know, but you worked with some of them in that training last year at Valley Forge Station, what did you all think of those 'lunkers' CAP", asked Nella.

Everyone knew when they referred to CAP you were not talking about an officer, but to the senior NCO, Gunnery Sargent Vaeao Tupua, call sign: CAP. G'THUNDA arguably the best sniper in the Corps. Tough as plastasteel, and no-one questioned His authority or honor. Everyone knew that CAP worked with the old Notqa' (bird) for years as his Non-Com , and the Colonel trusted his opinion above all others.

"Lazy, Sir" stated CAP matter-of-factly.

"Hear that", said Lt. Colonel Nella, "CAP, has their measure! And so StarFleet called in the A team, their loyal Groundbeasts."

Nella was talking them up a bit more than normal, it was not enough for anyone to yet notice, but one person in the room knew Nella well enough, deep enough to notice. That stomach tightened at what would come next.

"The USS Loma Preata will be bringing the two off world diplomats to a transfer point near Bajor. That is where Squad Arrow will meet them and escort them to the USS Golden Gate and the rest of the platoon." The next few words carried a distinct tension in the big Klingon's voice.

"Our illustrious diplomats are none other than the Matheritalian ambassador Prater Morlab Yaith", at that there was an intake of breath from some of the Marines in the room, but, "and Sarthikan Z'haru Be, the Eater of Shagra Nel" and with that name the discipline of the 49th MSG shattered!

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The questions came fast and furious from about ten of the Marines in the room. The rest of them stood with their mouths agape, and a few others just stared the the podium without seeing it.

"What's this all about",

"The Eater!?",

"Responsible for the mutilations...",

"They should be brought up for war crimes!",

"They were worse than the Jem'Hadar".

And with that remark, CAP G'THUNDA stood tall and slow, turned to face the assembly with a monster glare and bellowed "Marines Attend!", and the room returned to normal before the echo faded from the room.

Nella continued. "The Diplomats will then be transferred by Arrow Squad to the USS Golden Gate, where we will meet Admiral David Nottage who will be the final diplomat we will be escorting. They do have their own SWG trained but as you can tell there will be a lot of groups out to try to eliminate Sarthikan Z'hura Be, so they called in the best for the job. We will let the Admiral's security attend to Nottage, or so they will be lead to believe. They called on us for full coverage, so StarFleet will damn sure get what they paid for."

After we get to the USS Golden Gate and meet with Bravo Squad, we will be briefed on the three locations the diplomats will be visiting while on Earth. They will be making these stops in one of the mega cities on the West Coast of the North American continent. The site is called Old San Francisco, there will be access to the simulated terrain once we get to the Holodecks of the USS Golden Gate. There we begin setting up our offensive and defensive strategies.

We will be shipping out on the VMT Temjan in 28 hours, you Groundbeasts get your gear ready and get a few good meals in you. I'll see some of you in the gym later for Mok'bara."

The friendly tone, if you could call it that, left his voice after a pause. A scowl passed in front of his face then like a Samurai Mask of War, or the Klingon equivalent. Lt. Colonel Nella stood tall and stretched a bit more as he harshly stated.

"I want all you grumblers front and center, stand-to NOW!"

A full 10 members of the Platoon came forward to stand in front of the podium. A few had angry, stern looks on their faces. Fires of hate burned in all of their eyes however. Nella saw this, but discipline still had to be maintained. He knew his Goundbeasts though so he would use his leadership skills to balance the scales a bitwell maybe tip them back in his favor.

"You men don't like your orders, well too chalkin' bad, I get my orders from the General Staff and crap rolls down hill to your sorry butts! I don't care what you like and I don't want to hear your gousin' about it. If any of you", and with this Nella looked around the room, "if any of you interrupt one of my briefings again I will work you until you are all body sore the next day, so sore that you will have to get some stims from sickbay..... and guess who will be waiting there for you when you arrive? That's right ME! You will find the Med Techs and Doctors in sickbay unable to give you any pain killers or stims, you will just be aching all over. For as long as I am able to make it so. Do you understand me?" Growled the Klingon.

The 10 Marines in front of him all yelled in unison, "Yes, Sir!!"

"GOOD!" said Nella with a slight smile. "Then you jaS'la Ban will spend the next 12 hours loading the Transport with our gear, and if I hear you grumble any more about this assignment you will be loading for the last 12 hours too, is that understood?"

Again the 10, and all the others in the room said, "Yes, Sir!!"

There were a few frowns and hard stares at this news but not a one even breathed as the cold gray eyes of their commander stared into their own.

As Lt. Colonel Nella turned to leave the room, he looked over his shoulder to his NCO and said, "CAP. G'THUNDA, get these Targh out of my sight, and make an appointment for each of those standing up front to see me after 17:00 this evening, one at a time!" and he slid through the opening into his office, followed by his two officers.

STRIKE GROUP LOG: STARDATE 51587.2

Within the allotted time the Strike Group assembled their gear, all the things they would need to work in the 1G environment of Earth. The VMT Temjan was one of the Special Ops AT-2 Specters used by the Marines on special operations, it is one of the heavily armed gunship/transports, just in case. The 49th was carrying two MHS (Aerospace craft designate M=Special Ops, H=SAR/Medivac, S=Support/Amphibious Ops) Aerowing Shuttles which could double as a recon or a CnC command ship. Five Armored Ground cars, Emergency Medical quarters for 30. Also three special interchangeable shuttle modules, i.e. lounge, breaching hull, and fully loaded Recon/HEATS mods in addition to the Areowings standard medical modules.

There were crates for weapons, explosives and guns, rifles and phasers. Medical equipment for pararescue. Flash bangs and, ropes for Hostage assaults, thermite charges and magnetic grapples for ship breaching. A great deal of other hand picked equipment for most Special Operations were in the quartermasters stock piles of the 49th MSG. Phasers were not allowed in Old San Francisco, but when ever the Strike Group deployed they took all their equipment. The VMT Temjan was the official transport for the 49th, the AMC and Aerospace Command in general loved Colonel Nella. Qel Nella was on of the few Flight Surgeons in the Corps who could also fly a number of Aerospace craft himself. He also consulted on the upgrades and modifications for the Aerowing Shuttles the 'Fallen Angles' were assigned from Areospace Branch's Special Ops Division. From Transports like this one to Fighter craft and a few in between, Qel (or Doctor) Nella was a rare breed and he was well thought of at SFMCHQ. So most of the time all he had to do was ask and this ship was his to use without much delay.

Because of restrictions in Old San Francisco, plans had to be augmented from Strike Force missions on other worlds. Phasers with their high energy outputs would be off limits, so the teams would be issued EM projectile weapons and non lethal rounds.

In Ancient places like Stonehenge and the Pyramids in Egypt, certain frequency resonances that made up the energy used by phasers and transporters were not allowed with in kilometers of such old places. There were some places you could not transport to directly without a shielded transporter room, but most Terrans accepted these facts and lived with the restrictions. The 49th was not concerned about these set backs though, the one thing all of them knew was that there was always a work-a-round.

There was one thing that the Fallen Angles had to consider though when getting to Earth, they would have to be very careful of how they moved and the use of their own strength. The 49th habitually trained in 3G environments, if they were not careful as to how they moved while on Earth they could find themselves bounding away over buildings and structures. Though not unusual to see off worlders flipping and floundering about at times, it was mainly for amusement in special facilities. As soldiers the platoon they needed to be able to move without the hinderance of the special gravity monitors. After some training though, which they would practice onboard the Starship, the 1G environment would become second nature to move through. This would also give them some special abilities, and they would have to be aware of them.

They would be able to leap long distances with a bound, and lifting heavy objects would be as easy as opening a door. If they were not careful they could hurt themselves, so easy would it be to lift a half a ton.

At the head of the transport there was a warm Ready Room where the officers were located, making some of the plans for use of the Holodeck simulations that were to be used for the preparations in Old San Francisco. In a few moments Nella and Brando would take Arrow Squad to meet with the Ambassadors being transported on the USS Loma Preata, and then off to the USS Golden Gate.

While the VMT Temjan was on its way to the drop point some of the teams were talking among themselves. Some of the descenders were together but one among the five of them was talking with the most vigor.

"I just can't believe they would even consider letting the Shagra Nel into the Federation, those were some of the worst war time atrocities I have heard of in the last century, and it happened only six years ago!", snapped Houphman a Communications Specialist.

"I had a' mate who found some of the remains of the Lucky Eighty - Eight. He said to a man their hearts had been ripped from their chest cavities, Andorian, Tellarites, Bajorian they all had holes where there respective hearts would have been!", interjected the Medic, Specialist Carllevit.

"Yeah well I'm thinking of doing something about it, or maybe doing nothing at all.", said Houphman in an almost rage. A hand was placed on his shoulder to try and calm him a bit. After a moment and looking to see if anyone caught his ire, he continued in a more subdued tone.

"Those bastards caught my sister's company on Athos IV, the whole bloody company. They ate Cammy's heart, what kind of monsters do that?" His rage made him tremble, "Now the Federation is thinking of allowing them admittance, all those families on all those worlds that were touched by the war. It's a bloody slap in the face, I say to you." was the rest of Houphman's statement.

The rest of them mumbled and nodded in agreement, and they all seemed quite satisfied in their anger and outrage. So much so that they did not notice CAP look back down at his vidgame.

LT. COLONEL'S PERSONAL LOG: STARDATE 51588.3

This was one of those special moments when they were alone, where they could be what she called their alter egos. Few of the others ever saw this side of the two platoon officers.

He took her hands into his and looked into her green eyes, he could never remember seeing a color like that anywhere and he could feel his love for her, like some wild thing let loose upon him.

"Are you ever unhappy that you left all you knew just to be here with me, do you ever miss your past?", he inquired with blatant love in his own brown eyes.

"Hhummph, are you sorry I followed you?", she asked in her ritual response.

"Never a single moment!" he laughed and pulled her closer.

"The day you do I'll cut... She stopped short of the usual ending. "I was going to say.... you know..... but somehow it doesn't seem right."

"Go ahead and say it, I will never stop loving you! So it will never happen, even with the Eater of Shagra Nel on board.", he took her in his arms and kissed her before she could finish or protest.

They pulled apart far too soon for either of their liking. Straightened their flight suits and walked through the hatchway, their masks back on good and tight.

STRIKE GROUP LOG: STARDATE 51588.4

Nella and Brando walked through the hatchway and on to the MHS TRIDENT where the rest of Arrow Squad was waiting. They would use the three teams to keep up with each of the diplomats on the surface of Earth. This way each Diplomat would have four Marines looking after them, the Marines guarding Sarthikan Z'haru Be would bear watching but the Lt. Colonel knew he could trust his Marines. No matter what they felt inside, they were professionals and could be relied upon. Otherwise he would not have a single one of them in his Platoon. As Flight Surgeon he knew about their psych profiles and understood each one of them.

Nella knew about the talk that was going around, how some of the men disliked the idea of any of the Shagra Nelese aboard let alone having to be responsible for their lives, but the Eater himself!! The single person known to have been at more of these mutilations than any of the other Shagra Nelese. The Great General who was responsible for half a dozen victories on the ground and even a few at sea. The Battle at Athos IV was among the worst defeats handed to the Corp in over 50 years, Athos IV where 1,800 Marines fell in battle. Everyone not sealed in a Mech suit was butchered and mutilated, their hearts ripped out of their chests and no sign of the organ anywhere about. Later it was found that the warriors who participated in each sortie had later been observed eating hearts. To say the least StarFleet lost Athos IV to the Shagra Nelese and their allies the Matheritali who were fighting along side of their Dominion masters.

The fact was that Sarthikan Z'haru Be would pose a huge logistic problem once they got to Earth. StarFleet Intelligence had provided the 49th with all the facts they had on some of the groups that had the means to try an assault on the Ambassadors. There were at least three such organizations on Earth at the time. The largest threat came from a group called the Broken Wheel and their leader named Jaxcolm Matadoro. One of the Broken Wheel was seen in the greater Los Angeles Megacity near the Long Beach District. None of the other organizations have been monitored near the coast of the North American continent. But things could change very quickly and the USS Golden Gate would take another three days to get to Earth from this sector.

The launch of the MHS TRIDENT went smoothly as it dropped from the hanger bay of the VMT Temjan. Nella took the second seat but left the piloting to Second Lieutenant Lenny Emery, the TRIDENT'S new pilot. He needed the practice and Brando thought this would be a good way for him to get that, and gain some confidence at the same time. Captain Lynn Brando was good at sensing the troops needs, as cold as she may have seemed that was a carefully crafted illusion for their sakes. Brando was fiercely dedicated to her teams, she grew up on one of the first orbiting space stations. She joined the military at a young age, wanting to be part of something larger than herself and the small world she knew on the station. She lost all her family long ago, and had no other family, not here or in the past.

Marine Captain Lynn Brando was old school that way, she was part of the old MACO detachments of the pre-Federation days. "Thorn" Brando served with Captain Archer on the NX-01 Enterprise back in 2153, more than 228 years ago. About one standard year ago Nella and R'rraaww fell back in time and

encountered Brando's MACO team commanded by MAJ Joss Hayes, on an outpost at Cestus IV. The Gorn had the team pinned yet with the help of some new tactics, the MACO unit and their new allies drove the Gorn away from the Federation outpost, to their own base at the other end of the continent. After that the Caitain and the Klingon were allowed to repair their damaged ships and leave.

During that time one of the worst temporal catastrophes that could happen did. While the Marines from the future and the MACO's from the past encountered each other, two of them fell in love. Kered Nella told Lynn Brando that as much as he loved her there could be no life for them in the past. Too many temporal anomalies could take place, especially with a Klingon a in StarFleet uniform in 2153. But he said that if she were willing to come with him they could have a life together.

But that was as they say ancient history, from her station at Tactical Brando announced. "Sir, the Loma Preata is hailing us, shall I put them through?"

"Go ahead Thorn, let's get this evolution done with." said the Klingon.

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The medical equipment on the TRIDENT had been replaced with a lounge module for the comfort of their guests. After the Diplomats had been introduced to their respective Marine watchers, it was time for the two officers had to play host. A task neither of them were very good at, but Brando was not IN service with the Marines during the war, so she had little hostility toward their new guest. Nella was happy to be the silent Commander during their exchanges. It was one of the reasons the Klingon valued her as his junior officer. Because of that a little later on during a toast he found himself thinking more intimate thoughts about Lynn Brando, .. woman.

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Lieutenant Colonel Nella and Arrow Squad got the Ambassadors safely on board the USS Golden Gate without incident and after all the formalities of introduction with the dignitaries it was finally over. In those close quarters with the Eater, it seemed to Nella that he could almost smell the fetid breath of the creature.

One of the only reasons Alpha Squad meet the ambassadors was to make sure that they knew who would be watching them while they were on Earth. It would make things easier if things went wrong to be able to recognize by face and sound of voice those who would be there to rescue them. But now the job of host was given to Admiral Nottage, and this was what he was trained for. Nella was happy to have him take over, awkward was not the word that he would use while he had drinks with the Sarthikan Z'haru Be, and Prater Morlab Yaith. Now he could get back to the planning of the ground based operation. That made him feel much better.

R'rraaww and Bravo Squad got the transport off loaded double quick after they had been shown to Hanger Bay 4 where they were setting up their gear. The MHS TRIDENT and MHS QUICKSILVER, the MSG's two Aerowing craft were there getting a look over by their pilots. At this time the TRIDENT had the lounge module removed and replaced with its medical bay module. Ground cars were going to be used on this operation, and would be transported down to the surface prior to the start of the operation. Nella did not want to use air cars, they would be too easy to shoot out of the sky. So between being shot from the sky verses being attacked on the ground the commanders chose the ground cars as the least of the major complications that could be avoided if attacked.

Arrow Squad would be given stylish civilian attire to wear while guarding the Diplomats. They would be wearing suits from the Brooks Brothers replicator. They would be tailored to have their weapons look less conspicuous. Both the men and women would be wearing the same style of suits. This way they would neither blend in nor stand out like their uniforms would. It would not look well on the monitors of the UFP Media if the Ambassadors the Sarthikan and the Prater were being accompanied by soldiers; even the Federations own.

Now with the assistance of Arrow Squad, R'rraaww could have the rest of the equipment off loaded. The Platoon would have the use of Hanger Bay 4 and Holodeck 3 for the duration the their visit aboard the USS Golden Gate. And so with the knowledge that his officers had things under control Nella was now ready to see the Admiral. He was hoping that Admiral Nottage would be available. Nella hit his comm-badge with his right palm.

"Bridge" he stated.

"Bridge here", said the communications officer.

"This is Lt. Colonel Nella, wishing to report to the Commanding Officer." stated the Klingon in his rough voice.

"Ahh, Lt. Colonel, Sir, I am Lieutenant Clish Baroou and on behalf of the Admiral and crew I would like welcome you and the 49th aboard the USS Golden Gate. The Admiral and the XO are still occupied with the ambassadors, but your Commanding Officer is available to you. Head of Ships Security, Lt. Commander Frances Peregrine will receive you in conference room C, anytime you wish Sir."

"Lt. Baroou, I thank you, my Groundbeasts and I look forward to working with you, please extend my regards to the Admiral when he becomes available, and inform Lt. Commander Peregrine that I will await her pleasure in the conference room immediately." Stated Nella.

"And thank you Colonel, bridge out."

"Brando, with me!" said Kered Nella. "I'll be back R'rraaww as soon as I find what our new masters want with their humble Marines."

STRIKE GROUP LOG: STARDATE 51588.5

The room was one of those pretty rooms they put on a Starship so that the crew forgets they are on a tin can floating through space. The portholes had a view of Bajor at the time and space around the planet was just as dark as the rest of space. Lt. Commander Peregrine was sitting at the conference table waiting there with a smile on her face. Peregrine beckoned the Lt. Colonel inside the room.

Lt. Commander Frances Peregrine stood up and stepped forward to extend her hand but as Nella walked through the door she glanced down at the tables built-in computer monitor, then she turned back to Nella as he approached.

"Lieutenant Colonel how are you, I am very glad you could join us. Please have a seat." She took his hand and extended her other toward a seat.

"Thank you, Sir, we are happy to be of assistance. But may I ask why you wanted us on board for this?" asked Kered Nella

"Please call me Frances, Colonel... Good straight to the point I like that," said the Lt. Commander. "The reason we wanted your help is because of the

Sarthikan Z'haru Be, of course. So many beings in the Federation just don't like the idea of the Shagra Nelese on our planet or within the borders of the UFP. The Golden Gate's SWG is fine for the average diplomat but this is very sensitive."

"Since we will be working closely together for this operation, please feel free to call me Kered, Frances." said Nella with a genuine smile on his face. "So how do you see the Angles fitting into your plan?"

"I received your preliminary plan, Kered and I like what I see. But this is what I would like to do, I would like my people to be your blanket. Having the 49th as the point guard is just what we need for this operation. I will leave you in the operational command of this, I will expect to be notified of any changes and I will be monitoring the operation from the ship providing support from orbit." stated Lt. Commander Peregrine.

"It will be good to meet your people Frances, what do you say we get the teams together in the lounge for a drink later. That way they can all meet each other, we can get them training with each other tomorrow," and with a grin he added, "nice and early."

"I like the way you think Kered, can I ask you a question?" smiled Frances. "When you walked into the room the monitor showed you have some kind of implant grafted to your arm, it did not seem standard StarFleet or Imperial cybernetic, it lit up my board. Of course as Security Officer I am a bit curious."

"Oh this," Kered rolled up his sleeve to show her his arm. "This is an integrated Medical Diagnosis and Anatomical Scanner, much like a Tricorder but grafted to my body for a faster interphase. Once it scans a species the device keeps the data for later categorization. This device is unlike anything the Federation or the Empire has. I picked it up while I was aboard the USS Blackheart, those pirates gained all kinds of technology from where ever they are sent and use the profits to run their freebooting operations. They picked up this technology from a system when the USS Blackheart made it's journey back from the Gamma Quadrant. I was able to buy the schematics from the ships R&D department."

"It helps me to preform as a doctor in the field with greater efficiency. I can scan and get readings with a simple touch. I can turn it on or off with my mind, but when I touch someone there are times when that person may feel a bit more warmth from my touch. It is not dangerous but the warmth is just in

indication that the device is working." said the Klingon with a lecture tone to his voice. "Anything else?"

"It was just my monitor showed it as unidentified and there was nothing in your records that showed this, modification." said the security officer.

"I assure you Lt. Commander it is in my records, here allow me." The Klingon Warrior's fingers danced across the table top monitor as he explained, "As you know my Special Ops designation is classified. So there are some aspects of the records that are also 'Eyes Only'. I'm sorry but I'm afraid you don't have that kind of clearance, Frances. It's my fault, I can grant access and I should have done so when I read in your available record that you could not gain access to this information about me." he looked at the Lt. commander with a toothy Klingon smile, "It really did slip my mind sorry, and there."

With that the table top in front of the Commander pinged, and to what Frances observed it was a brand new record for the officer in front of her. At the top of the monitor flashing in thick black letters were the words:

LEVEL EPSILON 2 - THIS TEMPORARY ACCESS HAS BEEN
GRANTED FOR THE NEXT 6 HOURS, BY AUTHORITY OF
COFORCECOM.

The woman looked up from the screen with, what seemed to the Klingon to be a bit of concern in her eyes when she said.

"I'm a bit taken aback Kered, I did not think this level of 'Eyes Only' existed, have you been a bad boy, is there anything Auntie Frances should hear from you?", said Frances Peregrine with a twinkle in her eye for her guest.

The laugh that came from the Klingon was rolling and jubilant and after a moment he wiped a tear from his eye and said, "Let's just say that I have done lots of 'technical' work for the Federation and the Empire. May I be frank with you Frances?"

"Please do Kered, I would like to build a level of professional trust between us.", which was said with genuine sincerity.

"For a very long time now, the Empire has gone to great lengths to show the most fierce visage of the Klingon culture to the rest of the Galaxy. We

habitually place the hardest most savage members of our society into the Military. Rura Penthe is our only penal colony, and it is only for off world prisoners. Klingons have no major criminals because we funnel them all into the Military where their fierce attitudes can be of use to the Empire. I don't mean for you to think we don't have criminals but you see honor is well bread into the Klingon psyche. Those who are offered a way back into society via gaining honor as a Warrior, well only the worst decline."

"All of this you may know, but what you may not realize is that the scientist and engineers while never suppressed, are not widely advertised around the galaxy. We did not want the rest of the galaxy to know we write poetry and preform Shakespeare, we would not be feared if you knew we were sensitive too. For a very long time this attitude has served our purposes, but now things are changing. Our close ties with the Federation have grown stronger in the years after the Dominion War, officers like myself while working with StarFleet have been writing regular reports of our joint and singular activities and experiences. From these sanctioned reports the Empire has begun to take a new attitude about our role in galactic affairs.

In other words Frances, the Federation has been a very positive influence among my people, if it were not for your help long ago. The catastrophe of Praxis could have meant the end of my Homeworld, my people, and our culture." the Klingon's voice became just a bit lower, when he said. "My father was one of those rescued by StarFleet personnel during the early hours after the disaster, if not for your people's kindness I may not be here telling you this.

Military minds were in control in the years after the catastrophe, but now the days of the more diplomatically minded Klingon's like the illustrious Chancellor Gorkon, who was assassinated at Kitomer, are gaining power once more. The assassination, started a dark time of Military heavy handedness and paranoid mistrust. But there are still those who now see, what it is that the Federation truly represents. They remember Praxis the justice you used when dealing with your own people at Kitomer.

There are some who are gaining power in the High Council who remember the honor of Humans in particular among the Federation. With Worf of now the Federation Ambassador to the Empire attitudes in the High council have started to change. There are council members believe that the tlhIngan nuv can be taken seriously by the galaxy without being overly aggressive. The Federation and you Humans have show us this is possible.

Frances there may come a time in our lives when the Empire will seek admittance into the Federation. That is just between you and I."

The last he stated with for what seemed an uncharacteristic gesture for a Klingon, he winked at her with a big grin on his hard face.

"So you mean to tell me that you Klingons are really a bunch of intellectual Melvin's?" and the laugh that came from the Terran woman was almost like his own without the same bass register, and with that they both shared a good laugh. It would not be their one last shared together.

With the briefing over Nella asked permission to bring Cap. Brando into the room. The three officers shared a few more stories and had a drink of synthahol flavored as Scotch, a fine blend though Nella privately. Then after about a total of three quarters of an hour spent together the door chime sounded and the Lt. Commander stood and granted entrance.

Admiral David Nottage III, and his XO Captain Joanne Pappas-Nottage, walked through the door and into the room. Like two blots of lightning, Lt. Col. Nella and Cap. Lynn Brando both stood and rendered a full Marine Corps salute and came to an almost quivering snap of attention.

"Lieutenant Colonel Kered Nella and Cap. Lynn Brando, reporting for duty, Sir." bellowed the Marine Officer.

The Admiral returned the salute with a smile and extended his hand to the newcomer and his junior officer. The Klingon became less rigid and took the offered hand with a returned smile.

"Qel Nella, we are all very pleased you and your team could help us with this sensitive assignment given to us by StarFleet Command to carry out." The Admiral was tall for a human, about 172.5 cm with sandy blonde hair and affable smile, he introduced the officer next to him. "This is my Executive Officer and wife, Captain Joanne Pappas-Nottage"

Nella again gave a dashing Klingon smile, and was about to render another salute when Joanne reached out and said, "Your military bearing is something to be admired Lt. Colonel, but now you are part of our little family, for however long you are here. For that time I shall be Joanne, without the need for formality. Now let's sit and talk."

After introductions were made all around, they sat down to just talk and get to know one another for a few moments, before duty called them back.

STRIKE GROUP LOG: STARDATE 51660.6

After hours of training in Holodeck simulated scenarios the two squads were almost ready for a GO on the mission. The Squads spent the last three days on Holodeck 3, practicing maneuvers for the operation. Fifteen hours were spent on the first day with 7 simulations for all teams. The first day it took the 49th a few hours to adjust to the One Gravity of Earth in their Holodeck training. It only took three hours to make the adjustment for full counter movements and to learn how to under-compensate for a lower Gee environment.

The second day was longer most of it spent learning about the computer predictions and running a few of those practices. Then some other just-in-case maneuvers that Major Houanshu suggested might be of some use in the lighter Gee environment the squads would be working in. They managed to get 10 simulations in 14 hours of training for the operation that day.

The third day started with the last three practices the Squads would try, there would be a few surprises thrown at the Squads. Scenarios where off-world devices and bio weapons might be deployed. Lt. Colonel Nella liked to be ready, "Being caught with your pants down seems an undignified way to die." said Nella one afternoon long ago. The last two runs included the Ambassadors, it was a good thing that all were former or active military officers, who had no trouble following instructions. That alone made things easier, Nella gave instructions that if any of the Ambassadors asked questions they should be answered thoroughly, after each run. To their credit there were few questions asked.

#

Even though there are frequency resonance restrictions in the area, the Strike Group would be using their own transporter buffer enhancers for the insertion and extraction of the Ambassadors from and to the USS Golden Gate. The power of the ships systems can be modulated to reduce the effects of the frequency resonance emissions. The Marines also possess a more powerful transport inhibitor in the deflector array of each Aerowing. This would provide a more extreme sensation of the negative resonance effect, in the case of an

abduction or escape by enemy forces. The Marines can control all transporter signals with their inhibitor, with it they can render all non-sequenced transporter signals inoperable.

Arrow Squad was going to be the point guard on this operation, one team of four guarding each of the two Ambassadors and one team of shooters for the Admiral. These would be the only people allowed within half a meter dignitaries while on the planet surface. There would be nine of the Golden Gate's Special Warfare Group (Charlie Squad), carrying out the task of covering each of the stops or zones, three members at each zone. After the dignitaries leave each zone the SWG personal will sanitize each site and then signal for extraction.

Bravo Squad, the other three Strike Force teams would be split into two six man teams to provide air cover in the Aerowing shuttles. They will be providing emergency MedEvac or a fully armed Emergency Response Team if necessary. Each shuttle would cover one of the locations until the dignitaries left that location, then the Aerocraft will follow its sister ship until that team takes over. It then would proceed to the final Zone Yolo to provide escort or for immediate planetary departure.

The crew of the shuttles will be the Shuttle pilot, one officer and an NCO. Also one and a half MSG teams or 6 Marines. The Nine SWG shooters will be assigned to the ground:

The MHS TRIDENT will carry its pilot, Second Lieutenant Emery.

Lt. Colonel Nella in second seat and CnC.

Gunnery Sargent Tapua as Lead NCO.

[Call signs: TRIDENT, Notqa' and CAP. G'THUNDA]

along with Epsilon and three members of Gamma team.

The MHS QUICKSILVER will carry her pilot, First Lieutenant Crefu.

Major Houanshu in the second seat.

NCO the USS Golden Gate's SWG Senior CPO, Cheif Yargast.

[Call signs: QUICKSILVER, Leopard and BOSSA]

commanding Omega and the other three members of Gamma team.

Officers on the Ground are:

CAP. Brando, SWG Lieutenant Withers, CMDR of the SWG unit, LTC S'larth.

[Call signs: Thorn, Virus, and Cobra]

1 officer for each location to guide the SWG blanket teams, of 3 shooters per.

For this operation they would be designated as Charlie Squad.

Charlie Squad would be covering the locations themselves and arrive two

hours early to set up each perimeter.

The ambassadorial entourage would be visiting three prearranged places. These locations would be referred to on open comm channels as Zones - Wind, X-ray, and Yolo. Zone Wind happened to be named appropriately. The first location was going to be the view at Twin Peaks a wide open vista of almost the entire city located at almost the center of the town. Since the officials would take a transporter on and off the planet it was thought a wise precaution to arrive without fanfare to an easy and open area to cover. The ground cars would be waiting there with the MHS QUICKSILVER above the location with all stealth countermeasures active, in order to provide maximum support without undue attention. The MHS QUICKSILVER will be on station one half a kilometer above Zone Wind, sensors on full spectrum analysis.

After this the entourage would proceed to Zone X-ray, The Palace of fine Arts, where they would give the landmark speech the Ambassador's came to deliver. So sensitive was the subject of the address that only StarFleet command and Admiral Nottage were privy to its contents. The route here would be the longest drive the convoy would be making. There would be a long drive down the hill through town with a motorcade of armored ground cars and cycle-car escort through every intersection all the way across town. At the Palace of Fine Art there will be no civilians allowed, no reports or protesters. Only vetted residents who lived in the area would be allowed near the Zone, and they would all be cleared out before the motorcade grew near.

The Media coverage would be via electro-media interlink. Hover cams would record and transmit the speech all over the Federation as it occurred.

Zone X-ray was the feint, any observers may think that such an address would be given at StarFleet Headquarters, or so the route might indicate. All the observers were directed there, all the advanced news hinted StarFleet HQ would be the location for this historic address. That was the misdirection, to attempt to miss lead the Broken Wheel the organization which posed the greatest threat to Sarthikan Z'haru Be. StarFleet Intelligence reported members of the organization were seen in the area within the 300km the Operational Zone in the last 12 hours. Something could most defiantly could be up.

Computer sims, determined that after the address was given the Palace of Fine Arts could be fixed. The location could be determined by viewing computer image extrapolation. This means that the location could be discovered, so it was the most likely point to be hit. In scenario after scenario the computers stated that the ambush would take place in or near Zone X-ray. After the address all teams would be on high alert status.

The last location designated Zone Yolo, was the Golden Gate Bridge herself. The approach to the Bridge would then be the most heavily guarded, even though the distance is short. All teams from Zone Wind will be taken via the Aerowing shuttle MHS QUICKSILVER to Zone Yolo to take up positions and await the Ambassadorial arrival. The MHS TRIDENT would be the escort for the entourage's approach to Zone Yolo. All ground cars would be cleared to the location via local law enforcement escort.

Because of her age and state of repair no one was allowed to drive or walk upon the great symbol. But Admiral Nottage being the CO of her namesake vessel happens to be the rare exception. The Ambassadors would be driven to the center of the span and allowed to walk about. Then when they all felt ready to leave they will be transported back to the USS Golden Gate. Using the transporter enhancers and the ships systems they can minimize the damage done to the great structure. Strategically sound this will be the best place for a safe extraction since no one else will have access to the bridge. At this point of the operation both Aerowing shuttles will be on station near the Bridge.

The whole kit would then be returned home as fresh as an unopened present in no time. Once aboard the USS Golden Gate the Ambassadors would be taken back to their respective worlds by the Admiral himself.

#

So now as the humans say: It was time for the Ball to Drop. Go Time.

STRIKE GROUP LOG: STARDATE 51663.7

The view was spectacular and the wind was high, but from this vantage point you could see all the way over to the East Bay in some places, the tallest buildings curved around the Old San Francisco city from the Embarcadero and the waterfront all the way back a full two miles into the city. The tallest building was a tall slender spire of Chrome-steel. It was not as much of a building as it was a monument, but it could be seen plainly from Twin Peaks.

Generations ago the Admiral's ancestors lived in this city, so one of his fields of interest at the Academy had been the study and history of this old but not ancient city. He knew about everything and the Ambassadors were listening to his stories with a fair amount of attention, the man had a certain charisma about him. And so he told them the story of the huge spire to the right of the center of the City.

The Admiral held the attention of his guests, but for the last few hours Twin Peaks had belonged to Lieutenant Withers. The SWG shooters were in position to provide a tight cover for the open area around the Transporter pad. Alpha and Delta teams beamed to the site first, open comm channels conferred with Withers to confirm that Zone Wind was secure.

"Lynx here, teams on the ground. Virus reports are clear. Positions confirmed, nod from Falcon, awaiting your GO.", came the chatter from the surface and Alpha Team leader.

"Roger that Lynx, Leopard has the Eyeball, confirm the GO. Commence the Operation. Hammerhead go ahead, spread the jam." The was the Lt. Colonel as CnC, telling Beta team that R'rraaww was with his Squad on station, and that they could have the teams spread out for maximum coverage. They cleared the site along with the ground units analysis, it was now determined safe to bring in the Ambassadors.

That was twenty minutes ago now an Admiral Nottage was just finishing up with his story. The laughter from Z'haru Be was like that of a human deep and rich with mirth. You could tell that the Eater Shagra Nel was genuinely enjoying himself in the Terran's company. In fact after three days in the company of the StarFleet officers the off- world ambassadors were treated like old and dear friends.

Much of this comfortable relationship was due in a large part to the research and planning of Commander Helene Donohue the Chief Diplomatic officer. They had all meet during the reception given that first night on the USS Golden Gate. Her bright and intelligent eyes and easy going countenance made everyone feel so much at ease during the awkward party that night. Her briefing to the Golden Gate's command staff helped make the evening run smoothly. In fact on the first day Commander Donohue was gracious enough to brief the 49th MSG on the Shagra Nellese and the Matheritalian, and part of the reason they were here. She informed them of just about everything, but omitted any mention of the Address that Z'haru Be would giving. She said only that is was important so that the negotiations could be concluded.

They all got into the ground cars, black Mercedes Benz their Diplomatic Armored Class Deluxe. Driver, and shotgun, one Marine in the compartment with their charges and one more team member in the rear. The other two ground cars were there as decoy and cover and they carried the other teams and Holographic decoys. The Admiral and the Ambassadors would ride together, this was the longest part of the trip with the greatest exposure and it would not due to be isolated.

The motorcade traveled swiftly through the city and meet no delays or resistance on the way to Zone X-ray. The TRIDENT was now overhead having the close air support handed over by the QUICKSILVER moments ago.

"Notqa' has the branch, approaching Zulu X-ray", this was stated while the convoy still seemed on target for StarFleet HQ. During this stage the QUICKSILVER was still close, the Golden Gate Bridge was not far off so the ship would be close when the team went to High Alert.

That was what he was thinking when it happened.

#

There was activity on the corner, a few tween-agers were horsing around when a young girl fell into the street with a slight scream. The Motorcade was moving past at a fast rate of speed, but the rear car's driver Hawk still managed to turn the car. The girl was hit but, it could have been worse, she could have been dead. Hawk swerved to the right and ran the car into the sidewalk shield which brought the ground car to a stop.

"The is Falcon we were clipped, approximately 15 seconds back to formation." was the transmission from Delta Leader.

All of the feed was coming through the cams and sensors on the TRIDENT and CAP was giving it a close look on his board, yet he did not take his eyes off the main part of the Motorcade which was just pulling up to Zone X-ray.

"Something IS happening, Sir", stated the NONCOM "There is someone walking up to the lead vehicle!"

Then the monitors on the Aerowings when blank.

#

The rest of the Marines were moving like bubbles through syrup. Things seemed to slow down as the man identified as Jaxcolm Matadoro aimed is weapon at the door and fired. The disruptor beam rocked the ground car and disintegrated the door. The smoke from the weapon eating through the door was enough to obscure vision yet, just as it happened there erupted a smoke screen that appeared from out of no where. Much like the members of the extremists organization did themselves.

Those inside the vehicle were dazed and shaken, acrid smoke filled the cabin and Jaxcolm Matadoro reached out with both hands to grab the blue satin jacket of the Sarthikan Z'haru Be and dragged him out of the car. Too dazed to fight back the helpless Ambassador was moved into another standard ground car that just pulled up next to the Broken Wheel's leader. As the Ambassador was pulled from the car another Extremist tossed a flash bang into the car to delay pursuit from that team.

As the Marines from the second car emerged, weapons drawn. Disruptor cover from across the street opened up on them keeping them in the vehicle while their accomplices tried to get away with their important captive. With the disruptor fire exposing their location, one of Charlie team lobbed a concussion

grenade into that area in two volleys. The shooting ceased, but the Broken Wheel's ground car was moving off rapidly down the street.

#

Captain Lynn Brando saw the ground car pulling away down the avenue with the Ambassador in the back. Without a second to spare Brando jumped from the window of the second floor of the observation house. She landed in a crouch, drew her weapon and sprinted after the car. She had picked up speed rather quickly and was right behind the vehicle, she raised her weapon to fire. Her round hit the rear panel fin sending Ultra-fiberglass about in a short spray. Brando was getting ready to try to get beside the car to shoot the driver, but just as she made that extra effort to sprint, the ground car rose slowly into the air.

Without slowing her forward progress the Marine holstered her weapon, and made a vertical leap 9 meters up the building directly to the left. She grabbed the ledge and lifted herself up to make another jump, with the quickness of a squirrel the Captain had gained the roof of a five story building in no time. This would have been almost impossible under normal conditions but Brando had released the restraint that the squads had been training to control for the last few days. Able to run faster and leap higher in this 1G environment Brando was soon running beneath the air car. Roof to roof like a panther, now at least 50 meters above ground she saw her chance and leapt from the roof to try and grab the car!

Brando grabbed on tight to the car's right fin, and was just about to use her other hand to stabilize herself and gain a better hold. Yet before she could the fin shattered under her iron grip, crushed Ultra-fiberglass shattered in her face as she lost her purchase. Brando was 60 meters above the ground falling fast and nothing could stop her!

The danger in working in this type of low Gee environment, the reason for such care was you could easily pull your groin from lifting an incredible weight or throw a disc in your back. In some cases causing serious injury even death. You could do many incredible things but you were still human. Her bones were not extra dense nor her muscles super packed. Her bones would be broken at the least, but from this height falling at this speed she was as good as dead.

The Marine was a warrior and death meant little as a Solider, she had been ready to give her life in service throughout her career. But Lynn did not want

to die yet, her biggest regret was that she would never be able to be intimate or vulnerable with the Man she loved.

The breeze felt so good, she closed her eyes.

LT. COLONEL'S PERSONAL LOG: STARDATE 51665.8

Nella was briefly aghast as he witnessed what was happening so very quickly since CAP. G'THUNDA spoke. All comm's were down and the control over the transporters were offline as well. The Lt. Colonel took over the stick from Lt. Emery and said.

"I am taking her down, Sehlat get your team ready for a rope drop to the ground for immediate deployment. CAP get me those systems back online quick!" barked the Klingon.

The hatch opened and the Marines jumped from the ropes with a bolt fast swiftness. The ship fell out of the sky as, slowing with in 5 meters of the ground the team was able to scramble the rest of the way and was moving in quickly to secure the area.

Within seconds the TRIDENT was back in the air above the scene, and CAP had the view screen back online just in time to see Lynn leaping to the first of the lower buildings in her chase to catch the rising ground/air car. Nella had seen the Marine do some crazy things in the past, literally the past. Since she came forward with him she seemed to be taking things a bit easier during the last year. But this reminded him of the old Lynn Brando before she found a place in her heart for more than just the Marines.

And just like that she was falling, falling and there was no way he could catch her from here.

"CAP get me those transporters, man we need them ASAP!!!" pleaded the Klingon.

"I am sorry, Sir the transporters are still offline. I got the simple systems back quickly we have comm but not the transporters I am still working on it."

Unable to look, but just as hard not to, Kered watched as Lynn plummeted to the ground. It was all happening so fast..... and then just like that, she was gone.

"Was that you CAP? Tell me you beamed her aboard!", said Nella.

"No, Sir.... But..." was what the NONCOM was about to utter.

"QUICKSILVER to TRIDENT we plucked your Thorn for you, Sir. About to touch down to the rear of Zone X-ray to re-group and assess." the was the voice of Lieutenant Crefu, QUICKSILVER's pilot.

"Copy that QUICKSILVER, But how did you...?" Nella was at a loss for words thinking Brando lost in action.

"It was Leopard, Sir, he prioritized the repair of transporter systems, said he knew you would be working on communications first. Thought we might need a working transporter between the two ships. We were far enough from you so that our systems were not damaged as much." Reported Lt. Crefu.

"R'rraaww, I owe you again old friend," he knew he broke protocol by saying his friends name on a comm channel. But at this point he did not care if anyone knew of the gratitude he felt toward his oldest comrade.

STRIKE FORCE LOG: STARDATE 51667.9

After giving the controls of the MHS TRIDENT back to Second Lieutenant Emery, Lt. Colonel Nella disembarked and was striding towards towards Sehlat; the Epsilon Team Leader.

"SITREP Sargent." , was the first thing from the Klingon's mouth.

"Sir, it looks like we caught a break, please come with me." and the Vulcan lead his CO over to the entrance to the Palace of Fine Arts.

Sitting there on the ground with a Federation blanket draped over him was the Ambassador Sarthikan Z'hura Be! The Ambassador stood up tall and straight, with no signs of trauma, when the Colonel came over to speak with him.

"Sarthikan, ... Sir, we are glad you are unhurt, can you tell me what happened?", Nella asked.

"Yes Colonel Nella", the Ambassador cleared his throat and continued, "When it became apparent that something was amiss Admiral Nottage asked me to exchange jackets with him." the blanket came away slightly at that point and Nella could see the Federation Staff Officer Dress Tunic on the Ambassador's shoulders.

"It looks like there was too much smoke to realize they had the wrong person, until at least getting into the ground car, looks like they went for the Sarthikan only, Sir, but how did they know he would be in the blue jacket?", Asked Epsilon Leader.

"They did not know Sargent," stated Nella, "They went by their target's build, see the Sarthikan and the Admiral are roughly the same size and build. The Prater Yaith is a bit more female then the other two. With the jacket and not the uniform, they chose the too obvious way to identify their target. Qlp jlv puq", was what he said next. Obviously a Klingon oath.

"I am sorry Colonel Nella I did not catch that.", inquired the Ambassador.

"It was nothing Ambassador, I was just referring to the Broken Wheel as amateurs, please forgive and excuse me, I should check on Prater Yaith." , and with that the Lt. Colonel moved over towards the other dignitary. "Sehlat, get your Med Specialist, Spider over there to look at the Sarthikan."

"Bridge, put me in touch with the XO and Lt. Commander Peregrine.", said the Klingon warrior as soon as he hit his combadge.

"One moment, Sir.... I have the Captain and the Lt. Commander on the line, Sir.", stated the Comm Officer.

"You are on Scramble Priority Lt. Colonel, Report.", it was Joanne Pappas-Nottage and her voice sounded terse.

"Sir, we were attacked 230 seconds ago, the extremists of the Broken Wheel have captured Admiral Nottage as a hostage, mistaking him for the Sarthikan Z'hura Be. Other than that no casualties and we have apprehended 6 members of the Broken Wheel.", The Klingon's report was crisp and fast, he was well aware that the Captain's husband was the one being held.

"Very good Lt. Colonel, I am glad to know that the diplomats are well. I know David and he can take care of himself, with that silver tongue of his he may

well walk out of there, with the Broken Wheel demanding they be admitted into the Federation as well.", some of the tension had left her voice after hearing that the Ambassadors were okay. Strange reaction thought the Klingon.

"We can't get the Extremists to talk yet but we have a way to track the Admiral, Sir. We are about to put a DNA trace on him.", was the statement made by Nella.

"How did you get such a complex tracing device on David so soon, Lt. Colonel?" asked his Commanding Officer. Frances Peregrine said this last with a trace of amusement in her tone. "Tell me did it have something to do with that interesting device grafted to your arm?"

"Yes, Frances as a matter of fact it was just that. You see every time I shake a new acquaintance's hand the 'device' takes a sample of their DNA for analysis and recording in my personal Medical DataBase. If I have to treat that person in the future it provides me with an immediate baseline from any known facts picked up on that initial scan. Truth is I forget it is happening, until I need it. This time we can use it to our tactical advantage, when I load that information into our location algorithm we should be able to pinpoint the Admiral's location to within 5 meters."

"Interesting," said Joanne, "We will discuss your interesting 'device' a bit later Lt. Colonel Nella, right now I understand you and your Squads have a rescue mission to plan. I expect you will be home in time for diner?"

"Roger that, Captain, SITREP every half hour, we'll get em back, Sir!" stated the Lt. Colonel. "Nella out."

#

She gave him a start when he turned around. Lynn was standing right behind him and there was a strange look on the Marines hard but lovely features. She took one tentative step toward him, then leapt at the Klingon and grabbed him in a fierce loving embrace. She looked up into his brown eyes and he could see that there were tears in her eyes. She pushed up on her feet and kissed her Commanding officer right there in front of all the other Marines milling about going about their business and making preparations for the rescue.

Kered felt her body tense up and so he grabbed her back and held her tight, returned her passionate kiss with his own happiness at her being alive. He pulled her up to him tightly and she relaxed in his arms. She bit at his lower lip and pushed away from him a bit pulling him with her a bit, then she said.

"Kered, Marry me!"

The Klingon looked a bit confused at her immediate outburst.

"Be my Mate you big Klingon taHqeq! You are mine, take The Oath with me today! All I could think of Kered, was that I would never be held by you again! I won't die regretting that we could not be together as Klingon and Woman!, I won't die without being yours."

"Lynn Brando, you are the most fierce warrior I have ever known, and you have had my heart since we first meet!", Nella said this with his loudest voice of authority and so everyone within the Zone could hear his voice. "If you had died today a huge part of me would have died as well. There is no way I will be without you as my mate from this day forward. Let us take The Oath, today my love!"

The Klingon Warrior pulled his Human Warrior close for a sweet kiss, and with that, the whole Platoon erupted with a cheer. Even the Ambassadors seemed pleased. But Nella had one more thing to say.

"If we don't hurry and the Admiral back, there will have to be a Klingon wedding and you don't want to have one of those. So let's hurry up and get the man who will marry us back up to his mate and into the big black."

STRIKE FORCE LOG:STARDATE 55667.10

They wanted to strike hard and fast, it was the way Nella liked to hit the objective if he could. This time all the cards were in their favor for a change. Within 15 minuets they had a plan of assault, it took just about that long for the computer locater to find the DNA match of David Nottage. It seemed he still had a few relatives living in the area and it took a few more moments to extrapolate and sift the data.

Even though they could not break those members of the Broken Wheel that they captured. There was the fact that the Marines did have the only member who was a local. All the others were from the South American continent,

where the majority of the Humans from the lucky Eighty - Eight were from. So they did not know about local things, like regular weather patterns. For centuries the West Coast area known as California was thought of as the haven of Sun, warm weather and resort quality beaches.

Today according to meteorological reports one of the things that the northern part of the California region was not well known for would be drifting in soon for its usual, almost daily visit. The Broken Wheel had no one to tell them that this was normal for this area. The San Francisco Fog was imminent and StarFleet had the means to hurry it along a bit. That evolution of the plan was about to be started as soon as the MHS QUICKSILVER got off the ground, the coordinates were being uploaded to all navigation computers now.

The 49th was going to split up into its two squads again Arrow squad was going to stay with the Ambassadors of course. It seemed that the Sarthikan was determined to give the address, for his friend Admiral Nottage. He said he now saw the great importance of becoming a part of StarFleet. Now more than at any other time during the negotiations. He was determined not give up on this important overture of peace.

Bravo Squad was going to do just what they came to do, kick ass and take some names, then leave those names up someone's ass! The plan was to use the fog as natural cover to move the men into position via rope drop. If the group had thermal imagery to monitor outside the fog's cooling effect could help to cover the squad until they got within striking range. The other funny thing about fog was it really did have an ability to blanket sound. Something to do with air pressure, Nella did not really know how that worked but he did not care as long as it worked to his advantage.

They were going to use the MHS QUICKSILVER's deflector dish to help cool more air off the Pacific coast, being Autumn the Pacific stream this far north was bound to be freezing. The house the extremists were using was in the sub-district known as the Sunset, remarkable irony since they were going to help that happen a little sooner than normal today.

Lynn approached him as Bravo Squad was forming up to embark the MHS TRIDENT.

"Colonel Nella, Sir, I want to go with you!", she announced.

"Brando are you still a Marine after this near death experience you had not too long ago?", asked the Lt. Colonel his voice hard, it carried. His eyes looking directly at her were soft with the unspoken words she needed to hear.

"Of course Sir, a Marine first, last, and always!!", Brando replied smartly.

"Good then follow my orders, Lynn I know you are hard as dilithium but I will need CAP's dead-eye on this. It might be a difficult shot even without the fog.", he hoped she was hearing him, her face did not seem to register the explanation.

"I feel as if I almost lost you ", she trailed off, downcast.

"Don't start doing this Lynn, you are stronger than this. I know it and so do you, I'll be back from this routine mission then and we can talk. Think back to your training Captain. Remember your team has your back, they will never fail you!", he gave her a big Klingon hug, kissed her forehead then looked into her green eyes.

"Make sure the Eat.. Err, Sarthikan Z'huar Be makes his speech so we can call this mission a wrap. When we get back with Admiral Nottage, you and I have a date to get marr-ied.", When he looked in those eyes again, and there was a smile on her face. Then that smile was covered by his lips.

They kissed until his combadge chirped to call him to the flight.

#

Operational silence was being observed on the TRIDENT as they came into position over the area near the Extremists safe house. Hand signals and soft text messages were the only authorized means of communication at this stage of any operation in Lt. Colonel Nella's book. All of Bravo Squad was aboard the shuttle and they were ready to go. The three teams would move in on the house using thermal imaging HUD on their helmets. Teams Epsilon and Gamma would be deployed a few houses away from the target. Once they were in position Omega team would be lowered slowly on to the roof of the dwelling.

There was a text message from R'rraaww aboard the QUICKSILVER. He was reporting that the method for trying to gain more fog was working! In a few more minuets, (even as far inland that the Sunset District was) they would

soon be covered in a blanket of Fog so thick visibility would be only a few hand lengths. Nothing could be more perfect, or so they thought.

By this time the Broken Wheel discovered their mistake but they were willing to capitalize on their error. If the Federation allowed the Sarthikan Z'hura Be to make his address then their captive would pay the price. The technique was standard, and even if they had captured him they would not have killed the Sarthikan without demands. The extremists would have likely used the same methods to demand the elimination of consideration for the two worlds to join the Federation.

The truth was for Nella and his squad was this was good news! It also told the Klingon that indeed the organization of the Broken Wheel were only Qlp jlv puq. [the literal translation from Klingon: stupid ignorant children] StarFleet could use the time to negotiate while the Strike Force moved in. Epsilon team had just been dropped off and were awaiting the signal to move into position. 2nd Lt. Emery made the TRIDENT do a small tilt and bank to fly to the next drop zone. The deployment of Gamma team would be on the other side of the block.

The computer diagram of the house was lit up with the occupants of the dwelling glowing in crimson on the screen, David's marker was in green. The names of the members were above them, statistics like vitals and types of weapons were being added each second as sensor data was collected. There were six hostiles in the two story house, and two doors front and rear. They had David in the upstairs bathroom of the master bedroom, sitting in the old fashion bath tub. All of this was displayed on the teams Heads Up Display inside their helmets.

Facing north was the front door with two men guarding it, there was another guard at the rear door, and another outside in the back yard. Two men were upstairs with David and one of them was Jaxcolm Matadoro. The leader of the Broken Wheel was pacing back and forth in animated conversation with someone on his link. Nella in the CnC of the TRIDENT could hear every word as he was patched into the dialogue via the Federation Negotiator.

"I think we will give your solider man one of the old style "neckties" they would use to strike fear into the hearts of police officials of the old drug days. The kind they show in the cinema.", boasted Matadoro over his link. "This one he talks too much, I would just as well shut him up in this way! You just make sure that Puta does not say a word of that speech, do you hear me?"

The truth was the address was about to commence in a moment, and the plan was to carry out the maneuver when it began. Both ground teams were now in position and Lt. Emery piloted the TRIDENT to deploy Omega team on to the roof. Sensors indicated that the extremists had no advanced electronic precautions. They had very little time to set up anything upon their arrival, so this was no surprise. There was the Vid Viewer on in the Master Bedroom. This was so the Extremists could monitor the media coverage of the events they caused, and were here to prevent with this coup.

Without much noise, the Omega's slid down their ropes toward the front of the house's roof so that the guard in the back yard would not see or hear them. Dropping in from 7 meters also put the Aerowing craft well out of site in this thick fog bank. Noise suppression on the ship took care of those sounds. There was the faint.. wiezzz of the ropes as the team slid down them, but the fog gobbled up that sound too.

It was a good thing that there was a guard out in the yard, he would be able to raise the alarm if they were under attack. Unfortunately no one in the house, would have been able to just look out and see him in all that haze. Mantis had the target out of commission and replaced in about 15 seconds, quickly donning the others jacket. It was mighty cold and windy out in that fog tonight.

Now the TRIDENT moved into a shooting position for CAP. G'THUNDA to set up to take his shot. The Marines knew from his psych profile that Matadoro could wig out and shoot his hostage. So Gunnery Sargent Vaeao Tapua, would be set up to take out the leader with a stun round. The new electro charge projectile that could be fired from the P-688 sniper rifle acted like a stun gun. Nella would pilot the craft himself at this point. The task was not made any easier with the slight wind coming in from the west. Nella knew the craft, he had helped design the refit after all, so he should be able to hold 'er steady. They had done this before made the deadly shot from the air, Nella holding the ship and CAP squeezing the trigger. This time Fog made actually seeing the target harder, but the master sniper would be using the computer telemetry and the P-688's holographic sight assembly to make the shot. Still one in a hundred snipers could make this hit. Luckily one of them was taking up his aim right now. CAP steadied himself, laid upon the deck of the TRIDENT. He took a deep breath and held it..... then lined up Matadoro's in his sites.

The board lit up with the signal that Omega team had planted the charges on the roof. Epsilon and Gamma teams were in position right outside the rear and front doors. Everyone was ready to go.

A light on the Ops board in front of the Lt. Colonel, and then.

"We would like to interrupt your scheduled program for this special announcement from The United Federation of Planets and the Planetary Governments of Shagra Nel and Matherital.", proclaimed the Vid Viewer. "Ladies and Gentlemen of the UFP I give you the Sarthikan Z'hura Be of Shagra Nel."

Jaxcolm Matadoro became visibly enraged, he screamed obscenities into the link as he removed his weapon from his pants and moved toward the bathroom. He took one angry step forward; then he was down convulsing and writhing on the floor! The guard in the bathroom came out surprised to see his comrade flopping about on the floor. Then the roof got a great big hole put into it by the charges. Wood, plaster, fiber glass insulation and sheetrock were the types of debris that came bursting into the room.

Seconds earlier, Nella said "GO ONE" and the leader of the Broken Wheel got hit by the marksman sniper, CAP. G'THUNDA. The Gamma team member at the rear tapped on the door. Mantis disguised as one of the extremists motioned to be let in to use the head. That took care of the rear, all of that took 2.3 seconds. "GO BOOM" was the next command in the ears of the team and the charges on the roof and at the front door went off simultaneously, taking all the other extremists off their feet and completely by surprise. Stun bolts incapacitating the rest of the targets so they could be secured.

Soon they moved in to secure the area, and locate the Admiral. The whole operation was over in 6.4 seconds. Almost just as planned. And as the dust and the smoke settled about the room the voice of the Sarthikan Z'hura Be could be heard making the address of apology to the Federation for what were the supposed atrocities of their actions in the Dominion War.

#

The news of the day were not the deeds of the Marines of the 49th Marine Strike Group that evening on the Vid News. The biggest news of the month perhaps the year was the apology and formal request by the governments of Shagra Nel and Matherital.

The Sarthikan explained that to his people it was the way of war, to open the vessel of the spirit. So that ones "Brechka" [translated from Shagra Nelese as: Spirit of a Warrior.] was released to the heavens. Such a thing was done when an honored opponent was bested on the battle field. There was nothing more honorable, then to have ones "Voraish" [translated from Shagra Nelese as: container of ones spirit] removed and shared with the living. By consuming your foes Voraish you would keep that warrior's Brechka alive in those who were blessed enough to fight another day.

What seems strange and horrific to us was an honored tradition in war for the soldiers of Shagra Nel. They were giving high tribute to those whom fate allowed them to best in battle. They believed that when one consumed such an honored warrior, the victor would house that Brechka within them so that the vanquished brave would ride within a warrior spirit to the end. To be seen as never dead, never forgotten.

The Sarthikan explained that the Shagra Nelese fought as bravely and honorably as possible even with this misunderstood custom. When they saw the true faces of those with whom they fought for and with, they were stricken with a sense of horror and dishonor. From that point on they would burn the bodies of any Jem'Hadar or Cardassians they found. Those warriors would never find release for their Brechka and would be doomed to roam the battle fields in horror forever. Such as were their beliefs, and who is to say ones beliefs are wrong. One can never truly know.

Z'hura Be's elucidation was eloquent and sincere, he pleaded for understanding when the time came for the member worlds to vote for their admittance into the Federation. The way he delivered the address made people all over the Federation re-think their views on the matter between their worlds. And in the days that followed more and more minds were changed as the best parts of the speech were repeated in the news.

#

Once the teams had cleared up the mess and the city of Old San Francisco was in a fashion back to normal. It was noted by the Prater Morlab Yaith that they had not been able to visit the historic Golden Gate Bridge. So the USS Golden Gate delayed her departure from sector Zero Zero Zero, One for another day. Plus the members of the USS Golden Gate and the 49th MSG had one more duty to preform.

LT. COLONEL'S PERSONAL LOG: STARDATE 55669.11

R'rraaww was a master strategist and tactician. So when informed of what was happening, the things he had to work with. He came up with a plan in just a few hours. And all the time between now and zero hour were spent making last minuet preparations. The area around the site had to be just right, R'rraaww knew with this assignment the 49th would not get a second chance.

The moment the commotion of the mission had ceased, Kered went looking for Lynn. Their decision had been made quickly, but they both knew they were destined for it when they returned from the past together. Lynn was feeling much better and brightened as soon as they were alone and talking together. Kered spoke softly and listened when she spoke, Lynn loved that about him so much. Kered was different from some other known Klingons of the time. Being a healer-scientist-warrior made his outlook unique. Listening was being the healer, in the past some humans may have referred to him as a Shaman. For Qel Kered Nella, the honorific meant much more than Doctor in Klingonise.

After a few intimate hours together the two Marines went to find Admiral Nottage after they rang to see if he could be spoken with. They came to ask if he would marry them tomorrow afternoon. They told the CO and XO of their meeting, their whole history together since meeting in what is reality was one short year. Then Lynn asked Joanne if she would be her Woman of Honor. The Captain told the Captain she would be delighted. Kered knew something would have to be done about that, later.

"Lieutenant Colonel I have been meaning to thank you and the 49th officially for your help and rescue. Please allow me to throw the reception here aboard the Golden Gate.", was the gracious invitation given by the Admiral. "And there is something else I would like to offer you and the members of the 49th MSG."

He smiled and looked at his wife. Joanne also smiled, and gave a slight nod.

"We would like to offer you a fleet position with us aboard the USS Golden Gate. You see we need a real Marine Detachment onboard. Our Special Warfare Group is good but your Platoon would give us an added advantage in situations where our diplomatic services require help in touchy situations, as it were. Your groups Pararescue knowledge, not to mention your own medical

expertise Qel Nella, make it an exceptional fit. What do you say Colonel?" inquired the Admiral.

Kered looked at Lynn and she smiled a yes at him with a twinkle in her green eyes for them all. It looked like the 49th had found a home. Anyway it was going to be a great way to see the galaxy.

The Klingon reached out to take his hand, but the Admiral hesitated.

"Go ahead, Sir, it knows you already so it won't bite.", at this the Klingon grinned.

The Admiral, took the offered hand and shook it vigorously. That winning smile all over his face.

#

It was an Autumn evening in Old San Francisco and the cold wind blew threw the entrance of the Bay. It was cold but not cold enough for the kind of fog they had yesterday, ahh the beauty of unpredictable San Francisco weather. So they put a portable force field on both the West and East sides of the structure so the wind would be negated. It was a light force field that was only strong enough to keep back the wind, nothing more.

It was time to start the ceremony and everyone was there. The groom and his best Caitain in their dress blues, were standing facing west toward the setting sun and Admiral Nottage. The groom's men included the Sarthikan Z'huar Be and Gunnery Sargent Vaeao Tupua all in their dress uniforms. The Prater Morlab Yaith was standing next to Captain Joanne Pappas-Nottage, as one of the Women of Honor for the Bride.

R'rraaww planed the whole thing, and the rest of the Platoon was in attendance. The whole thing was being transmitted back to the ship. Cold yes, but the wind was down and the Sunset was going to be lovely. There were ships in the bay and in back of them was the City and StarFleet HQ. StarFleet arranged for the wedding to be held on the Golden Gate Bridge herself, as a nod for doing such a fine job in helping this mission end successfully.

Here comes the Bride was being played as Lynn was being driven up on to the bridge in one of the ground cars. She pulled up and the driver got out to let Lynn Brando out of the vehicle. She moved to Kered's side wearing her

Marine Dress Whites. And wearing a second diamond, not on her finger but on her lapel. Tradition stated that if a Marine Captain was serving with a Naval Captain, the Marine would be referred to as Major. The powers that be unanimously thought that should be made into an official promotion.

"So do you ever miss your past?", he smiled at her.

"Are you sorry I followed you?", she asked.

"Never a single moment!" he laughed and pulled her closer.

"Good because the day you do I'll cut out your heart!" she said with sincerity.

"Because without you I'll have no further need of it." That earned him a kiss.

They were all standing on the Golden Gate Bridge, and Kered and Lynn said their vows in front of all those they worked with and cared for. They said their vows with the sun-setting in front of the happy couple, starting their lives together at the end of a very beautiful day.