

The background of the cover is a detailed, high-angle view of a massive space station or orbital colony. The station has a complex, multi-layered structure with numerous windows, corridors, and external components. Several smaller spacecraft are visible in the foreground and midground, some appearing to be in motion or engaged in a battle. The overall scene is set against a dark, star-filled space background.

# STAR TREK

# Asteroid Field

Old Divide

Grizz | James Amey

In 2387, a planet sized ship entered the Accobar-Tyrella Asteroid Field, transported Asteroid Base: Alpha and its crew to an unknown location. Chloe Harper was also taken aboard the ship. This ship belonged to a species known as the Trizor whom had met with Starfleet Admiral James Wright several years prior – to make a deal to allow them to experiment on Human subjects to help find a solution to their degenerative condition. Although these events occurred hours after a supernova occurred in a nearby system, David O’Neill, new Chief of Security of Pioneer Station was able to rescue Harper and the Trizor ship was destroyed by forced asteroid impacts and pulled into the Black Hole.

One week following the incident, Commodore Max Jones was appointed to the station by the President of the UFP with full authority of the station itself and those on it. He was also there in a controversial role – to represent the people of Earth for diplomatic relations. Within days of his arrival, he began repairs to Pioneer Station and the rest of Asteroid Field Operations with several Starfleet Engineering teams.

But his arrival also came at a price. He too knew about the Trizor incident and was only there to keep Harper, O’Neill and the other residents of the station quiet by whatever subtle means necessary. At the end of his first week, he made sure that he would have a permanent position on the station under the title of ‘Executive Administrator’ – but also called in Starfleet reinforcements to man Pioneer Station.

With AB: Alpha still missing and the civilian administration being pushed aside, the process of rebuilding Asteroid Field Operations continues....

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## 1

Sh’ral stood, arms crossed, in front of the five glowing fusion reactors. Each with a frontal cylindrical light pattern of yellow and orange, spinning in unison. One month ago, there was only one reactor, flawlessly capable of managing the power requirements of Pioneer. But then Jones came and changed everything. In such a short space of time so many things were now different. Despite still holding the title of Chief Engineer, every move he made had to be logged with the Commodore. It was nothing but pointless and time consuming in this Andorian’s eyes.

“Excuse me, Commander Sh’ral?”

He turned and looked down slightly at one of his junior officers, holding yet another action-logging PADD.

“Let me guess, for Commodore Jones?” He asked her, “It’s all I seem to get.”

“Yes, sir.” She replied, timidly, apparently intimidated by the Lt. Commander.

“Very well, I’ll take it...thank you.” He hurriedly snatched the log out of her hands, apologising for being so aggressive afterwards.

He took another look at the five reactors and shook his head, remarking under his breath that one day the station will blow to high heaven. Leaving a passing, yet capable, crewman in charge, Sh’ral walked towards the large double doors behind him, but as they slid open the room filled with light.

Squinting for a moment, he cursed under his breath at Jones’ new maximum lighting policy – something he had done every time he left his intentionally darkened Engineering. Fortunately an opportunity arose in the shape of Paul Riley, emerging from the turbolift at the end of the short and narrow corridor linking Engineering to the Computer Core.

“Ah Mr. Riley, how nice of you to pop by, heading to Ops are we? Be a good human and take this.”

Riley slowed to a stop, now staring at Sh’ral, who was smiling back at him. Glaring at the PADD directed for Jones he whimpered, “No.”

“Oh come on, be a friend!”

“When have you ever been a friend to me?”

“Last month...when I saved your life.”

“That was you ‘doing your duty’ remember...”

“Alright, two days ago, I bought you a drink at Omarg’s.”

“It was a free glass of water you brought over.”

“Yes well, you need water to survive now just take the PADD.”

Riley rolled his eyes and took it anyway. The only reason he had come down was to speak to Sh’ral but now it could wait. Sh’ral beamed, self-satisfied, and waltzed back into Engineering, leaving Riley back in the turbolift and heading to Deck Two instead of one.

On arrival, he made an almost imminent left turn, facing Chloe’s office. Moments after tapping the bell, the doors opened to reveal a more formalised version of Chloe than he was used to. Riley smirked and remarked that:

“A smart dress shirt and a stylish yet suitable reasonably length skirt? I’m starting to think the Trizor cloned you more than once?”

“Ha-ha, hilarious,” she replied, sarcastically, “Now get out of here you cheeky little ...”

“Alright, alright, don’t shoot the messenger!” He joked, stepping backwards towards the turbolift while she read over the log.

Chloe had made sure that anything going up to Jones went through her first. Once Riley had vanished and the doors opened once more, she stepped inside, taking a final glance over the contents on a hope to keep up to date with station activities whether Max Jones liked it or not.

“Operations.”

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Ruby was working her way through family albums, projected holographically atop of the coffee table in her quarters. It had come in use for something, seeing as she doesn't drink coffee. She jumped up as the door chime went, not expecting visitors.

“Computer, end display.”

The images dissolved away into the ether and Ruby smartened out her uniform, prepared to be called away on duty if required. But when answered the door, she didn't expect to find a once far away friend standing with a large case in her hand.

“...Jasmine...?”

It was. Jasmine Thomas was around the same petite size as Ruby and looked much younger than her actual age. Her brown hair was tied back in a small ponytail and she was wearing a grey full-body uniform with a yellow strip at the top and around her lower neck.

Ruby gasped and placed her hand over her mouth, shaking slightly,

“Oh my God...I can't...how did you...”

“Oh come here.”

Jasmine dropped the case and leapt forward to embrace Ruby and whisper in her ear.

“I've been trying to get here ever since I heard”

“How did you manage to?”

“I got myself assigned to the latest Starfleet group coming here... I missed you.”

Jasmine kissed Ruby gently on the cheek and then let go, being invited inside. She picked up her case and smiled sympathetically, knowing what Ruby must have gone through, having lost a family member in battle in the past. As they stepped inside, those passing by could see that the two were more than just friends.

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“Administrator Harper, do come in.”

Chloe walked in the room towards Jones' desk, which was now much larger than it was when she was sitting behind it. A lamp sat at one end while a small plaque reading

'Executive Administrator Jones' rest in the centre. On the way in, she had also noticed 'Max Jones' in place of 'Chloe Harper' on the doors.

"I believe that title is somewhat outdated these days, Commodore."

"Nonsense...you still get kept up to date with critical changes."

"Yes, of course I do. Here, latest Engineering report."

She gently threw it down on his desk from a close distance and then turned towards the door, but Jones stopped her.

"Miss Harper. You do know that the Presidential Election is coming to its end?"

"Yes...and I expect G'rath to be re-elected."

"Oh that's good to hear, because he's quite popular with the public. Just be sure to ensure that your staff don't become...too audible when it comes to their opinions on the candidates."

"They have every right to voice their opinion on who should lead the Federation."

"Perhaps. But we don't want to upset the status quo, either. That's all."

"Oh fantastic, thanks for your precious time." She muttered under her breath while walking into Operations.

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"Pushing yourself is not wise, Commander O'Neill"

"Then maybe you should stop aswell, Ambassador."

"Letting you win our wager would not be wise, either."

David and Adria were side-by-side jogging through the station's corridors along a course agreed by the pair in an attempt to see who was fitter. But on the way, they had been able to have interesting discussions regarding the current state of the Asteroid Field.

"I'll tell you what," David shouted as there was no-one in sight, but starting to pant, "It's getting very quiet around here with Omarg back with his Casino!"

"I agree!" Adria shouted back, starting to creep in front, "I don't even know why I'm still here! Jones didn't even twitch when I told him the Xai were leaving!"

"Isn't that what caused Ruby to...what was it...'aggressively oppose his command?'"

"Aye, that's the one alright." Adria replied, still moving ahead slightly.

"I didn't even get a say in her removal of duty! Oh wait, wait wait, we're coming up on her quarters, I want to see how she's doing."

"You're only saying that because you're tired and I'm ahead."

"Adria..."

"Alright, alright. Take as long as you need."

"Now who's tired?"

David smirked and leaned against the wall with her for a while before buzzing Ruby's door. But there was a long pause with no answer.

"Maybe she's not in." Adria remarked

"No...she's been confined to quarters for the next few days."

"Sleeping?"

"Maybe."

He gave it a little longer, and it paid off when the doors opened. Only, it wasn't Ruby who answered. It was Jasmine – in nothing but a towel with dripping hair, now free from its bind, shoulder length and wavy.

As David looked away and began laughing on the inside, Adria stepped forward to take his place.

"We were...wondering if Miss Pallet was alright although I'd say...she's quite fine."

"Oh yes," Jasmine gleefully responded, "She's great, fantastic in fact!"

"Well urhm, that's alright then...sorry to disturb you."

"No problem!"

Adria smiled and walked away as Jasmine closed the door.

"Was that what I think it looked like?" She asked a calming David

"Yes...yes I think it was."

"I had no idea that she was..."

"...no, neither did I."

"Well then, good for her."

"Yeah," He smiled, "Good for her...although...Casey will be *crushed*."

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## 2

David's comment of the station being quiet was valid. Although things seemed to be running smoothly on the surface, on closer inspection, things were falling apart. The stations and outposts throughout the field were now safe for use, but they were no good without people on them.

An intake of Romulan refugees on one of the mining outposts forced many Klingon residents out, who have since left in anger. Ambassadors aboard Pioneer Station have steadily slipped

away as Jones has gone back on nearly every promise previously made by Starfleet and of course, without AB: Alpha, the remaining inhabitants no longer feel as safe and secure as they once did at the focal-point of two major conflicts in the past few years.

Adria was also correct; her plans for a new life in diplomacy had come to nothing. Jones had put talks to a halt and Chloe's title of 'administrator' was subject of scrutiny. But despite everything, nothing could stop Omarg returning to the station on New Year's Eve to transform one of the shuttlebays into a celebration hall.

By the 31<sup>st</sup> December, the bay was decorated with appropriate banners of various exotic colours and patterns. Flags and emblems lay attached to each wall, representing the major races and cultures still present on the station. They swayed slightly from side to side, due to the artificial wind Omarg had arranged from above.

He made sure that the night would be one to remember as the Asteroid Field had bypassed Christmas altogether in respect for the other alien races present...that, and the fact that one of the reactors almost overloaded. Although private celebrations were loosely scattered around that day, Omarg was intent on getting everyone together to see out a disastrous year and move into the next – no matter how many comparisons Chloe made with Pioneer Station and a nightclub.

But this was not only New Year's Eve for the Federation, it was also Election Night for the Presidential Office, and current President G'rath was in his office, preparing for his final speech before the voting began, with Venn also present.

"I need that station out of the way by the end of the week, Venn!"

He growled and looked out on the grounds of Starfleet Headquarters, with his red and green cultural robes now clinging to his shoulders. The Vulcan raised his left eyebrow in response,

"Do you intend to put that in your campaign speech?"

"Do not try my patience. Not tonight."

"I told you that my team is awaiting my order to depart for the Accobar system."

"Then **send** them!"

"There is a reason for everything, Mr. President. Sending them now would be unwise."

"Why?!"

"Giving Miss Harper and her crew a chance to enjoy themselves tonight would be a good thing to do. They'll send their final goodbye messages out without knowing it. Reports will go out, detailing how everyone is happy and having a good time. Then, the destruction of Pioneer Station afterwards would only add to the emotional impact. People will be too busy grieving to point the finger."

G'rath's tongue momentarily slithered out of his mouth, to a slightly audible hissing sound. Venn glanced at a chair near his feet and then took a seat.

"Mr. President...do you have a backup plan should my team fail?"

"The self-destruct."

"Jones? The extra reactors? Quite an explosion."

"Precisely. What cover story do you have for your team?"

"The people of Pioneer Station are traitors to the Federation and are plotting against the President – conspiring with the Trizor."

"Good. That covers not only the crew but any potential Trizor sightings in the Asteroid Field from outsiders."

"It was a very logical story."

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In her quarters, Ruby was trying on various dresses in preparations for Omarg's celebratory gathering. Currently she was modelling a sparking, light purple one, showing it off to Jasmine for her opinion. Jasmine herself was wearing one of similar design, although Black instead of purple.

"Well...what about this one?" Ruby asked, hopeful that she would have finally found one she is happy with.

"Ruby...wear whatever you like, you'll look beautiful in whatever you have on. I'm sure you'll grab Casey's attention either way."

"Casey? What about Casey?"

"Oh just...something I overheard." She began laughing,

"Well anyway...do you think Jones will be coming along?"

"God, I hope not."

"Uh-huh," Ruby replied, now satisfied with the dress after some minor adjustments,

"What's wrong? You look down all of a sudden."

Jasmine's demeanour had very much changed at the mention of Jones. She remained quiet for a few moments before a sharp intake of air.

"Ruby..." She patted on the sofa next to her, signalling Ruby to sit next to her, "I don't want to go into a new year lying to you..." Now it was Ruby's turn to change.

"What do you mean...lying to me...?"

"I'm not part of the maintenance crew..."

"...but you said you came with..."



"I know. But as I said, I lied."

"Then how did you get here...?"

Jasmine opened her mouth to speak, but hesitated, knowing that there would be no going back for Ruby if she told her. She informed her of this, but Ruby agreed to carry the burden of what was to come.

"I'm part of... I'm part of Admiral Jenkins' crew. I was a late "addition" to the maintenance crew. She sent me to... sent me to..."

"Sent you to what, Jasmine?!"

"Spy on Jones."

....

Riley was preparing to leave for the festivities when someone chimed his quarters. Inconveniently for him, it was while he was reaching for his pants, and whoever was waiting was impatient. Leaving them flat on the bed, he almost tripped up rushing for the door controls. He expected it to be Sh'ral, whom he had arranged to meet before setting off for the shuttlebay. But it was not. The doors slid apart to reveal Casey and another equally as large security officer in full gear.

"Mr. Riley?" The other officer asked, "Paul Riley?"

"Yes... Yes, Casey what's going on?" But the other officer answered first.

"Paul Riley, I'm arresting you on suspicion of sabotage with the authorisation of Admiral Jones and the President of the United Federation of Planets."

There was a moment's silence, which was harshly broken by an outburst of laughter on Riley's behalf. The two officers stared at him, silently, Casey looking more and more concerned by the second.

"No really," Riley gasped on an intake of breath, "I bet that Andorian got you round here. I knew he had a sense of humour really!"

"I assure you, this is not a joke." Said the security officer, reaching for his phaser.

"Lieutenant," Riley's voice shook, "What is it I've done exactly?"

"Caused the hull to breach on Deck Eight, Junction 47."

"Are you kidding me? That almost killed me!"

"Please come with us now, we are authorised to use force to bring you in if necessary."

Riley ran back inside, the officers followed, but then retreated when they realised he was rushing for his pants.

"I suppose Chloe doesn't know about this!" He flustered, pulling them up one leg at a time. Both officers didn't answer.

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The atmosphere was quite the opposite in the shuttlebay. A conversation was impossible unless it was a mouth to ear situation. Omarg had pulled out all of his possibly stolen gear which he had been using previously for his 'social gatherings' and the New Year party was in full swing, with two hours to go until the big moment. Humans and aliens alike were now mingled together, no matter what they usually celebrated. Even Ruby and Jasmine had showed up, although not making as much eye contact with each other as they usually would after Jasmine dropped the bombshell that she was working for a reported traitor.

Shuttle maintenance tables had been pulled out and replaced by magnificent, lengthy dining ones. Upon them, food and drink from worlds all around the Quadrant, and even beyond in some cases, thanks to a recovered recipe book from the USS Voyager's former Talaxian chef.

Most of the crew, barring some unlucky souls who drew the short straw on the night shift, were present. Sh'ral was also nowhere to be seen, and obviously not Riley or Jones. For the three of them were about to have a little party of their own in the Brig.

"Admiral, this is outrageous!" Sh'ral exclaimed, defending Riley, who was now sat in one of the two forcefield-secured cells. "The breach was, come on let's face it, an outcome of the Supernova! You can't just assume it was this man simply because he was there at the time! I was there too! He almost died in that junction."

Jones sighed heavily and led Sh'ral out of the Brig and into the Armoury section of the twinned rooms.

"Lt. Commander, I understand you have developed a friendship with that civilian..."

"That civilian does have a name, sir."

"I understand you have developed a friendship with *Paul Riley* but that does not change the evidence that Mr. Brent here uncovered. Commander, please explain your findings."

Sh'ral glanced at Jason, who was behind the Armoury desk, suddenly looking mildly embarrassed. He got up and moved around to one of the wall terminals, which displayed a mass of sensor readings.

"As you can see, Admiral, Lieutenant, I was attempting to confirm the cause of the breach by scanning for any known weapon traces or obvious signs of degradation matching that caused by the supernova. It was quite a fluke that I came across it, but one of the

logs...here...shows that Riley entered the Junction and weakened the structural integrity field in that area by almost 80 percent. Enough to cause the hull to breach due to the extent of the damage around it.”

Sh’ral stood stiff and silent, looking at the sensor records which confirmed what Jason was saying. Jones ordered Brent to continue, so he did so, after a moment of hesitation at Sh’ral’s shock.

“They also... they also show that Riley did some scheduled work in that area, after weakening the integrity field, and then made his way back, but got caught in his own work as he tried to leave the junction.”

“Let me guess,” Sh’ral started, “He stabilised a fluxuating power supply.”

“Yes, why?”

“That’s the work I sent him to do in that junction.” Sh’ral sighed again, shocked and disappointed. But not as shocked as when a dishearten Chloe learnt that Jones had ordered the arrest of one of her civilian crew, but nowhere near as shocked as when she saw the evidence for herself.

### 3

G’rath’s robes were now more magnificent than ever. He was only a few hours away from making his final speech to push for more votes in the on-going election. Venn was still present, updating him regularly on their push to silence Operations in the Asteroid Field.

“It’s a shame that Black Hole even exists. If Captain Munro hadn’t pushed the two stations behind it, they would both have been destroyed and this job would have been so much easier.” The President remarked.

“Well, at least AB: Alpha is no longer a threat”

“Yes, at least the Trizor came in good for something.”

“Mr. President, the ships have been dispatched and are awaiting Jones’ order to proceed into the Asteroid Field. All traffic has been blocked into the Accobar System.”

“Good...then maybe I can have a quiet second term.”

“Indeed. You may also be happy to know that Paul Riley has been arrested.”

“Good, if we want to bring Chloe’s control to minimum, he will be the perfect place to start. Also...contact Jones, ensure Adria Thomas does not leave the station.”

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Chloe looked up at the large, golden projected clock on the main wall in the Embassy suite. She had watched it for some time, as it now counted down towards the year 2388. David joined her briefly, asking what she was doing there, alone. They both discussed the subject, but he eventually left to return to the party at her suggestion.

They had talked about Riley. The evidence was there, but Chloe refused to believe it. She trusted Jason's findings, but on the other hand knew that they could have been placed there found him to find. David said that he would try to unofficially investigate, but she didn't get her hopes up.

The clock struck 2300.

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"One hour to go everybody!" Omarg boomed through mic, "Consider the next hour's drinks on Admiral Jones! Whey-eh!"

"How uncharacteristically kind of a Ferengi" Jasmine muttered, sitting alone at a candlelit table near the edge of the shuttlebay. The scented candle had been burning slowly, which she wasn't too pleased about as, well, she didn't like it's "scent" at all. Seeing as Omarg put it there, she wasn't surprised.

Taking a sip of supposed 21<sup>st</sup> century red wine, she looked to her right and saw Ruby dancing in a group of male and female officers, an interesting mix of Humans and Aliens. She had said that she would be ten minutes, forty minutes ago. Jasmine was afraid that her revelation of being on Pioneer at the command of Jones pushed her away – too far away.

But her mind was soon put onto other things when her view of the dancers was blocked by a man's chest.

"Lt. Casey," she announced, "What can I do for you?"

She resisted the urge to laugh when she saw his face. He was grinning, a lot, something no-one on the station had ever seen him do.

"Well...Miss....Thomas. I have in my hand..two PADDs..full of information."

"What kind of information would that be?"

"The kind of information..that says that you should be on Starbase 234...and the kind of information...that also says that you shouldn't be here, and is actually considered to be a suspected traitor."

Jasmine's jaw dropped and the wine glass went back down onto the table before she ended up dropping it on the floor. When she saw Casey smirk, she asked what he planned to do with the information. In response, he deleted everything stored on the PADDs.

“Why mess about arresting you...” Casey laughed out, “When I could be having a drink with you?”

“I.. I see.. Urhm... I’m sure you would much rather be having a drink with Ensign Pallet, so I’ll go and..”

“No no no, you stay right here.”

“But...”

“Who needs “Ensign Pallet” when a gorgeous woman likes you strolls on board?”

“Right then..I’ll go.. get us some drinks. You best not...I might never see you again.”

Jasmine got to her feet, intending to head to the bar, but was confronted by Ruby after a few steps into the crowd.

“You’re having fun.” She said

“Don’t worry.” Jasmine replied, “He’s not my type.”

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David scrambled through the logs which were to be presented as evidence against Riley. He had sealed himself in the Armoury while Jason was in the shuttlebay. It wasn’t the way he was planning to spend his night, but as a personal favour to Chloe, he was willing to be flexible – although still planned to be down with the rest at 00:00.

He was currently tracking down an anomaly in the event time, suggesting a possible tampering of when the structural integrity modifications actually occurred. But he was getting nowhere fast. Every time he almost pinpointed the exact time of the anomaly, the system crashed, requiring a reboot. Which was why Sh’ral was also now with him refusing to venture to the shuttlebay now Riley was not there to accompany him.

“Do you have any sort of time frame?” Sh’ral asked.

“Between 1300 and 1345.”

“Alright..large time frame. All I can do is pull this fragment of the memory core and run it separately, that should prevent any system-caused crashes...purposely or otherwise.”

“Do it.” David ordered, with Chloe’s backing behind it.

It took a few minutes, but the logs from 1300 to 1345 were eventually downloaded onto a display PADD. Together they watched in shock at what truly happened in Junction 47. But it was too late, Riley had already been take off the station to a penal colony, awaiting trial. Jones didn’t mess about.

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G'rath took his place at the podium to thunderous applause from spectators not only inside the press hall at Khitomer, but also from Federation colonies and outposts across the quadrant.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Males and Females and otherwise...I have been proud to serve as your President and would be honoured if I were elected once again. This year has seen many tragedies, especially in the Tyrella Sector, and more pressingly, for the Romulan Empire. I know things have been tough, now that they have turned to us for support. I have done whatever is necessary to protect you from hardship, and will continue to do so for as long as I am in Office!"

The crowds cheered again,

"I speak to you now, as a new Federation Year approaches, I would like to thank everyone for their participation in merging Earth's yearly system into their own. But now...onto more pressing matters."

The countdown began, 20 seconds to 2388,

"If I am to be your President in the coming year..I will not falter in my cause for peace and prosperity for the Federation!"

Another round of clapping,

"I will continue in my duties to expand the Federation's scientific and diplomatic advances!"

Another bout of cheering,

"We have made progress..and I assure you, more progress is still to be made...and we WILL make it! So join me now, in wishing you and ourselves...a very Happy. New. Year!"

He banged on the podium as the large projected clock faces read "00:00 Fed Time" Those in the press room were on their feet, cheering, clapping and wishing each other well. G'rath smiled, knowing he had succeeded. But it soon vanished from his smug face. The large doors at the back of the hall were forced open, revealing Commander James Robertson.

"Mr. President, SIR!" He saluted and stood to attention in the doorway. The crowd were now silent, knowing that the man who had just crashed their celebration was a suspected traitor on the run. "May I.. speak with you, at once?"

Robertson spoke confidently, he knew that G'rath had no proof to share with everyone and so could not take forceful action against straight after his speech for peace. As the crowd looked back to the President, he smiled weakly and nodded, gesturing Robertson and his personal guards to the side room, with Venn frowning in the background.

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## Epilogue

So for the Federation, 2388 has arrived. Happy New Year would be famous last words indeed, for everything that has happened now was never meant to be. In the story of one Universe, Pioneer Station would be under the control of Administrator Keegan and Asteroid Base: Alpha would be about to be taken by the Hirogen due to the actions of well-known traitor John Sheppard. But this is not that story.....

Back on Pioneer Station, the party still roared into the early hours of the morning. A commodore sits in his office, not knowing what awaits him. Two young officers in love will dare to tread heavily in dangerous waters. But one science officer has a very big secret, one which will change events even more so than they have already.

The coming hours and days will push the crew further than they have been already. For G'rath...well...you know what they say...if you seek peace, then you must be prepared for war.