

In 2387, a planet sized ship entered the Accobar-Tyrella Asteroid Field, transporting 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.

Survivors from Asteroid Base: Alpha (Roxanne Swan, Adria Thomas & Brian May) have also joined the Pioneer Station science, diplomatic and medical departments respectably, along with new Weapons Specialist Jason Brent.

The process of rebuilding Asteroid Field Operations continues....

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## 1

It had been several days since the Trizor appeared in the Asteroid Field, and things were slowly starting to settle down – despite the obvious problems. Pioneer Station was still packed with residents of other Asteroid Field stations who could not yet return due to the damage caused. On top of that, ambassadors from worlds far and wide were now more or less in solitude in VIP and Ambassadorial quarters due to the current stand still in trade negotiations, peace talks and Federation membership sessions.

Nevertheless, the after effects of dealing with such a catastrophe were much more settled than they were hours after the event occurred. That was of course until the silence of the station was pierced with what was heard to be dance music emerging from various access ports such as Jefferies tubes.

“Does anyone want to tell me what that noise is?” Chloe had asked, emerging from her office at the rear of Operations. Riley responded first, although misunderstanding the question.

“A catchy mix of Human, Klingon and Ferengi music styles, Administrator!”

“Oh...a catchy mix.”

“Yes. Omarg’s mega mix, Track 3 as I recall.”

“Omarg’s mega mix?” She got out, laughing throughout.

“Yes, he plays it all the time at his social gatherings. I thought you would remem...oh...oops.”

“Social gatherings?”

“He urhm, didn’t want you finding out.”

“So these last few days when you’ve come in half asleep and poorly trying to hide a hangover..?”

“Omarg.”

“Right then.”

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In the messhall, it was madness. The tables and chairs had been forcefully put out into the corridor and also slammed against the sides of the room. The light settings had been changed to an ever changing pulse of red, blue, green and yellow. A large a ferengi-make speaker had been attached to the full length of the long bar table and was now at full volume with ‘Omarg’s Mega mix.’

In the centre of the room, Starfleet officers and civilian staff alike were entangled in dance. Some more intimately than others.

Omarg clambered onto one of the tables at the window side of the room and began getting everyone’s attention with an even louder siren.

“It’s 2300 everyone! You know what that means...! It’s-“

“Happy Hour!” the crowd screamed back at him.

Omarg’s short supply of staff seemed to appear from nowhere and turned up behind the bar, now filling up glasses with various exotic liquids and sliding them out for everyone to take. Losing all sense of judgement by this time, most of the ‘social-gathering’ go-ers simply downed their drinks in one and returned to the chaotic makeshift dance floor.

But in a few short minutes the messhall doors opened up, although no-one noticed, and Harper and O’Neill squeezed in between the dancers to reach Omarg who was now at the Bar helping himself to drinks. When they reached him, Chloe placed both hands on the bar and grabbed his attention.

“Turn it down!” She asked him.

“What?!” He shouted back, clearly shaken by her arrival.

“Turn. It. Down!”

“WHAT?”

“TURN IT DOWN!”

“I can’t hear you! I’ll have to turn it down!”

O'Neill rolled his eyes and Chloe shook her head as the Ferengi reached under the desk to lower the volume of the music. Although it turned a few heads, the dancing continued regardless.

"What is this, Omarg? A social gathering or an extremely well hidden underground night club?" O'Neill asked him, sarcastically.

"Well since everyone is so depressed recently, I took it upon myself to get things "going on" again around here."

"There is a reason for people being 'depressed' around here, Omarg," Chloe interrupted, "Every station is now on the verge of falling apart, people have been killed, Romulans are being forced to immigrate into our homes now AB: Alpha is gone and we may have a race of psychopathic soldiers out to dissect us!"

"All the more reason to have a party, don't you think?"

"No! I don't think! I need these people with clear heads. Not wandering to their post almost two hours late because they 'overslept' or having their minds on....other things!" She pointed at a corner of the room where a few couples of different groupings of Starfleet and Civilian couldn't keep their hands off each other.

"This isn't a party, Omarg; it's a future counselling group for alcoholics and unwanted pregnancies! Either lower the tone of this...this gathering, in every possible aspect, or Mr. O'Neill here will be more than happy to raid the room."

"Urh, sorry Administrator, will do! Although you know I can't give all these people refunds for entry and drinks, right?"

"I don't care, just stop this apocalyptic rave, because the last thing I want to hear in Ops at the start of the night shift is the timeless classic, Ferengi version of...what was this one called, David?"

"Smack my Grand Nagus up, Chloe."

"Oh yes...that, and is that the Xai Ambassador doing the limbo?"

"I believe it is...not so much in solitude as we were led to believe" David slurred, transfixed on the semi-humanoid Xai sliding under a pole. Unintentionally, his gaze moved towards the female dancers on the remaining stacked tables blocking the Jefferies tube access point. He was bought back out of his stare when Chloe hit him in the arm.

"Focus..?" She asked hopefully.

"Sorry." He mumbled in a schoolboy manner. "Anyway...Omarg, turn it down, tone it down or close it down."

Chloe nodded in agreement and headed back to the exit. When she reached the corridor, she realised that David had not followed her. She turned to see him edging again towards

the crowd surrounding the dancers. She would have gone back in for him if it were not for Omarg trying to announce a none-refunded early closure. It was her turn to roll her eyes and head off while mumbling, "Hypocrite," in jest.

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Adria jumped backwards onto her bed laughing hysterically. Gasping for breath as she tried to speak.

"Did you see...the look on Chloe's face...when she came in...?" She continued laughing at small things, clearly intoxicated by Omarg's mix of drinks. The person she was talking to crossed his arms, annoyed that he was forced to drag her out of there to avoid being caught.

"Do you know how lucky you are? I'm surprised they didn't catch you, the way you were acting on that table. You could be going down as the official Pioneer Station representative when the talks resume, do you really want to jeopardise that?"

Adria stopped laughing and shot daggers into him with her sharp glare.

"Lighten *up*, Jason, we had a laugh, didn't get caught and now...what are you doing in my quarters?"

"I just had to practically carry you here, no doubt someone saw us and will end up reporting it."

"Oh don't be so negative, Harper doesn't know a..."

She was suddenly interrupted by the door chime. Jason froze and looked at Adria; she was in no state to answer it.

"Stay here!" he blurted, hurriedly. He left the room and locked the door behind him.

"Hey!" Adria shouted, but unable to get off the bed.

"Be quiet!" he shouted back to her, readying himself an excuse as he tapped the door console.

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Sh'ral groaned loudly as he slammed his head against the top of the Jefferies tube.

"After all these years...you would think someone would redesign these things"

Surprisingly, someone round the corner agreed with him. Sh'ral placed his hand on the corner pole and peered round.

"Oh great, my day just got better"

“Oi!” Riley shouted at him, “What happened to us saving the day and becoming best buddies?!”

“That’s in the past.”

“Yeah, six days”

“Long enough for me, I assure you.” Sh’ral went back into the area he was in to start with, unfortunately, Paul followed him.

“So...been to one of Omarg’s soon-to-be toned down parties?”

“Party? I believe they were elegant gatherings.”

“Obviously not then,” Riley mumbled, scratching his head, “I suppose it’s too good for you?”

“Starfleet has certain standards which-“

“Heh, those standards didn’t stop Jason and Adria getting down to ‘Profit, Profit, Profit.’

“Really..?” Sh’ral perked up, “Interesting.”

“He seemed quite reluctant but she was completely out of it by the time Chloe interrupted.”

“Administrator Harper?”

“No...Chloe...come on Sh’ral, you’ve got to learn the concept of first name basis around here.”

“I am not used to being positioned on such an outpost.”

“Yeah I got that when you arrived...informing me I was relieved and all that.”

“How was I to know that the civilian government was in charge here? After all, we built this place.”

“Yeah and your Starfleet almost got it taken off somewhere like AB: Alpha.”

“That was Admiral Wright.”

“We haven’t heard from him, either, what exactly is going on?”

Sh’ral sighed and put his toolkit on the floor, obviously feeling harassed.

“Look, I don’t know, we don’t get told everything you know.”

“Oh...Chloe tells us everything.”

“Yes I’m sure Miss Ha...Chloe...does.”

Despite the negative attitude the Andorian was harbouring, Riley still smiled,

“Now you’re learning.”

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## 2

President G’rath tread carefully around his desk, reading the request from Pioneer Station which had been delivered by Admiral Jenkins regarding the continuation of diplomatic relations aboard the station.

“It’s a little soon to resume talks in the Asteroid Field, Mr. President.”

"It is never too soon for peace, Admiral, if Administrator Harper wishes to resume all these diplomatic endeavours, so be it."

"What of Admiral Wright and Commander Robertson?"

"We need a man there, someone to represent Starfleet and a separate party to represent Earth. Send Wright back to Pioneer Station, Venn has intelligence there, if he tells anyone something he shouldn't, we will know."

"...and the representative of Earth, Mr. President?"

"His name is Max Jones."

"Commodore Max Jones?! Mr. President if you send a Starfleet Officer to represent the people of Earth then-"

"As a member of the Diplomatic Corp for several, Commodore Jones is more than capable to..."

"...It's not his capability, Mr. President, but is it the right thing to do? We're already looked down on by Pioneer Station; do we really need to anger them further by having the military represent millions upon millions of civilians?"

"The call has been made, Admiral, thank you for delivering the message."

"But sir..."

"Get out of my office."

Claire remained for several moments but shot out the moment G'rath looked up at her again. The lizard-like President smiled as he took a final glare at the request from Harper. Directing his gaze towards Commodore Jones' open comm. link, he muttered,

"I have made sure you have full authority on Pioneer Station, don't let Harper, Wright or Jenkins push you around...."

"I have zero intention to let them do so."

"Then let the games begin."

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Chloe slid her hand down her face and placed both hands on the arms of her chair, sighing deeply as Omarg and O'Neill argued in front of her desk.

"You are not forming a union aboard this station!"

"Why not? I'm well within my rights to..."

"Why? What exactly do you hope to achieve?"

"If I want to make people feel better by having a few get-togethers.."

Chloe groaned in frustration and sat up,

“Oh God, not this again...Omarg if you want to organise an event in the messhall, fine, but disrupting the entire station and jeopardising the productivity of this crew...who by the way are in the process of recovery from an emergency situation...is not acceptable.”

“That’s you told.” O’Neill whispered to the unusually tall Ferengi.

“Well I’ve already spoken to someone from your Government who helps administer this station.” He replied to both of them.

“OH have you, how lovely.” David crossed his arms, wondering what he would come out with next.

“...and he has my full support in organising it...so does his committee..with the approval of the President.”

Chloe almost fell off her chair

“I’m, I’m..I’m sorry, the President?”

“Yeah, G’rak.”

“G’rath.”

“That’s the one!”

“That’s all Omarg.” She placed her hands together on the desk and smiled weakly as he left, confused.

The two left in the office stared at each other for a while before coming to the same conclusion.

“He’s so going to hold this over us.”

David nodded in agreement and then opened the door as it chimed. It was Riley, the Earth diplomatic party has arrived.

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Word of Max’s arrival had travelled fast through the station. Starfleet personnel were confused as to why he were here but were respectful towards him either way. Whereas the civilian staff were more concerned than confused to have another high ranking Starfleet officer aboard Pioneer – and that was just before they learnt that he had full rights and authority throughout.

Only hours after his arrival, Chloe and David had dealt with a multitude of complaints and special arrangements that needed to be set in place. But something that both wanted to address in person, was the unusual choice of Starfleet representative. Both O’Neill and Harper had a toss-up as to who would speak to Wright first. Although David won, he was ignored by the Admiral as he tried to speak to him about the Trizor incident.

When the Commodore addressed the station the next day, however, things really began to build the tension between the two crews.

“As I stand in the Operations Centre of this great station, I promise that my arrival will assist greatly in the rebuilding of Asteroid Field Operations and Pioneer Station. Very soon, Starfleet Engineering teams will arrive to co-operate with you all in repairing the damaged parts and systems of this base and the rest of the Asteroid Field. Do not let the disappearance of Asteroid Base: Alpha worry you. We are all very concerned about their well-being but it will not leave you undefended. As I speak to you, the Asteroid Field defence grid is transferring its command to this station and the engineering teams will also be fitting new shield emitters across Pioneer.

Each of you have the upmost support from Starfleet Command and also...the President of the United Federation of Planets. I am also pleased to announce that my arrival also brings diplomatic relations back to this station, fulfilling once more, the purpose for which Pioneer was constructed. If anyone has any questions about these changes, please contact me during my brief stay this week. Thank You.”

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That night, Chloe had met with Adria in the Lt. Cmdr's new VIP quarters, the administrator clearly felt challenged by the speech earlier in the day.

“He undermined my authority in front of the whole station. I wasn't consulted on any of this. We've got a Starfleet Officer representing Pioneer Station, Earth and of course the military. An Engineering team arriving to do work on my station. The President is no longer replying to me and Admiral Wright won't discuss what happened at the start of the week.”

“I know...I know it's hard but if Starfleet feels the need to take an increased role after all this then....well anyway, you will soon be wrong about one thing.”

Chloe took a sip of the wine that Adria had poured out for them both and asked what she meant.

“I've requested a transfer back to the Diplomatic Corp...when I got here in fact...very soon you'll have a civilian representing Pioneer Station, just how it should be.”

“Are you serious? You're giving up your role on Asteroid Base: Al..” she paused mid-sentence and realised what she was saying, “Oh yeah...Trizor...nevermind.”

Adria finished her drink and placed the glass on the magnificent table between them.  
“I keep being lured back to the military but this is where I want to be. Every time I stepped foot on Pioneer I realised how much I miss my more...diplomatic and understanding ways.”

Chloe smiled,  
“That’s good news....really...very, very good.”

Finally, she was about to get some support. But a question still lingering on her mind was, how O’Neill will react to it all.

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The following morning, when O’Neill entered Chloe’s office, he found Commodore Jones and Admiral Wright at the desk instead.

“Commodore, Admiral,” he acknowledged, “No Administrator Harper this morning?”  
“Miss Harper has been preparing the meeting hall for the Xai-Earth trade negotiations; we can’t stay in limbo forever.”

Jones resumed using Chloe’s computer after nodding at Wright, who spoke up,

“Is there anything we can do for you, Commander?”  
“Yes, actually, these security arrangements for today are quite weak. If anything were to kick off in that meeting hall we wouldn’t exactly be in the best position to stop it.”  
“The Xai are in no position to cause trouble Commander O’Neill, is there anything else?”

David was taken aback by the sudden dismissal of the potential problem, but nevertheless he knew he would have better luck speaking to Chloe.

“No sir, nothing at all.”

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### 3

It was precisely 1100 Hours and the meeting hall was now restored to its former glory. Banners representing the two races involved in the day’s talks now graced the walls and ceilings. The United Federation of Planets emblem rested behind the desk connecting the two parallel ones at either side of the hall. It almost resembled a courtroom, but this was much more vibrant. On entering the room, the Xai seating area was accessible on the right, and the Earth seating area on the right. Both were full.

At the central desk at the far side, Administrator Harper took her seat and laid out the agenda across the length of the table, along with minutes from previous meetings. She was joined on the desk by Commander Thomas, now officially representing Pioneer Station and also Lt. Commander O'Neill, as a voice for the Starfleet taskforce in the Asteroid Field.

Taking centre stage on the Earth bench was Commodore Jones and Admiral Wright, speaking on behalf of Earth and Starfleet respectably. Opposite them, Ambassador Lokai, speaking on behalf of the Xai Commercial Corp and Supreme Commander Bek'tar of the Xai defence group. When all were present and settled, a small chime played to signal the start of the session.

Chloe got to her feet and glanced over her notes to remember where to begin.

"As today's meeting is an official continuation of our last, I believe Ambassador Lokai of the Xai had the floor and will be permitted to continue. Ambassador, please..."

Lokai threw back his robes as he rose. He was a tall yet slender figure, resembling a praying mantis according to Riley. He wasn't far from the truth, either. Nevertheless, his presence was well felt around the room, despite being a member of a very peaceful race.

"Thank You, Administrator Harper," he began, "I would like to open this session by expressing our outrage at the three Starfleet representatives chosen for this meeting. Two of which representing civilian *administrations!*"

Adria suddenly sunk slightly into her chair while Jones remained unphased. Chloe cleared her throat and was about to take advantage of this opportunity to oppose Starfleet for this but went for a calmer route.

"Mr. Ambassador, I assure you that no-one is more concerned by the increased military presence not only aboard this station, but also in the Asteroid Field itself, more than I. I also can assure you that I believe the idea of a Starfleet Officer speaking for the entire population of Earth is absurd. However, for the sake of remaining neutral in my official capacity today, I will have to ask you to take your concerns and complaints back to our Earth Government who chose the Earth candidate.

As for Adria Thomas, here, she has spent many years working in the Diplomatic Corp and is currently in the process of rejoining it. Rest assured, indeed, that all of this will have no major effect on the outcome of these talks."

She smiled and nodded at Lokai who hesitated before returning the gesture. Chloe sat back down and allowed the ambassador to continue.

“Very well, if we can return to the matter of the Bsior trade lane. Previous Earth Ambassador Sinclair was going to review our proposal that the uninhabited planet in the Bsior system could act as a trade outpost for both our peoples and potentially more. But now that he is gone, what do you think of this proposal, Commodore Jones.”

As Lokai descended, Jones stood and cleared his throat. Chloe and Adria were both slightly worried as to how he would respond. Wright looked up at him and then back to the desk, he didn't have any notes or recaps of previous meetings on him.

“Ambassador Lokai, people of the Xai, at this time the United Federation of Planets is redoubling its efforts to rebuild Asteroid Field Operations and other vital areas throughout the Tyrella sector. We cannot afford to spend time nor resources on a trade outpost at this time, however are willing to reopen negotiations for such a presence in the future.”

Suddenly the Xai party burst into loud and aggressive discussions. Lokai got to his feet once more, and for the first time, Chloe saw anger in his face.

“We bring delegates and organisers from the Xai homeworld...all this way under the promise that serious progress will be made, just so you can say ‘no?!’  
Now more of the Xai were on their feet, looking just as pissed off as Lokai.

David leaned towards Chloe and whispered, “I don't like this. I told the Commodore we would need more security personnel here.”

“Now now, David, patience,” Chloe replied, before loudly clearing her throat and standing with the others, “Gentlemen, I think we can agree that recent events have been an inconvenience to say the least and I am as disappointed as both parties that these talks cannot be resolved today, so-“

“So...Pioneer Station would be happy to accommodate the Xai ambassadorial party until the situation can be resolved peacefully and orderly in the near-future.”

Chloe looked down and realised Adria had finished the sentence off for her. Not exactly what she was thinking about but it worked all the same. As both parties began to disperse, heading for the exits in annoyance, Commodore Jones and Admiral Wright approached the Pioneer desk.

David scowled under his breath as he was called away to deal with a minor issue in the corridor outside and Adria followed him to reach her quarters.

“Administrator,” Wright looked depressed and placed his hands behind his back, “I would like to inform you that Commodore Jones will be overseeing and controlling future sessions from now on.”

“Wait, what?”

“We...I...believe that at the current time, they would do better under Starfleet supervision. Especially after how the Xai reacted to the-“

“Woah woah woah, wait a minute. It was you two that said that the Xai wouldn’t have any reason to get angry and yet all the time you were going to just waste their time? This is ridiculous!”

“Now now, Chloe...” Jones started, just behind Wright,

“Administrator Harper, Commodore.”

“Yes, quite, Administrator...you must understand that things change with time. The Hobos star collapsing on itself caused a change.”

Chloe crossed her arms,

“I suppose you will want the whole station soon...”

Max smiled and signalled Wright that they were leaving, and just as they were out of hearing range from Chloe he muttered,

“One step at a time.”

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The last thing Roxanne expected after learning of Robertson leaving on Admiral Jenkins’ ship was to receive a communication from him to her terminal in the science lab while she was alone. He looked tired and distressed, hardly letting the petite officer get a word in.

“Listen to me; don’t trust Jones, not for a second. If you think Mr. Brent progressed through his career quickly you haven’t seen anything until you glance at Max’s record.”

“How did you know he was here? Where are you?”

“I’m still on Admiral Jenkins’ ship...”

“Why haven’t you got back to the Starbase?”

“Someone else was put in command there. When Claire found out, she plotted a course as far away from the Asteroid Field as possible – out of the Tyrella sector.”

“Well of course someone had to be in command while she was gone.”

“Yes, someone who just happens to be as close to the President as Commodore Jones with full command authorisation?”

“Alright I got the picture, but, why don’t you do something if you believe the President is crossing the line?”

“Because it can’t just be the President...even if they weren’t thinking straight, Starfleet would never accept such changes without consultation. No...someone is making these changes with him and until we find out who, we wouldn’t have much support or evidence to stand up on.”

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In response to the sudden Xai aggressiveness, O’Neill was now briefing what remains of his team, plus recent additions. Amongst the crowd of science officers were Brent, Casey and Ruby Pallet, sister to the murdered Vanessa Pallet.

“Now I know we’re a bit thin on the ground and I’m kind of still new(ish) around here. Not to mention all the repair crews getting in our way. But we still need to keep the peace, whether Commodore Jones is the one causing the disruption in the first place.

Casey, I’ve still got some administrative work to deal with, as fun as it sounds, so I’d like you to organise the station patrols for the remainder of the week. I know you’re more than capable to deal with any problems.

Jason, this so-called Engineering team arriving is going to be bringing a few new toys with them. If you could check them out when they get here? Good. Well that’s all from me so see Casey at some point for your assignments. Alright get on out of here...Ruby could I have a work.”

As the crewmen began heading off in several directions from the security briefing room, with others talking to Casey in the corner, Ruby slowly stepped over to the front of the room where David was following her with his eyes, sympathetically.

“Now, Ruby, I’ve offered you time off and you turned it down, I’m giving you the same offer again.”

“No, Commander, please. I need to keep working, it helps, promise.”

“I was on that mission when, when it happened, and I know that focusing on the job at hand kept me from thinking about what Casey told me about the shuttle. But sooner or later it will hit you, and I think it would be better for both you if it happens sooner rather than later. You need to grieve, Ruby.”

She looked down at the floor and closed her eyes.

“They didn’t even hesitate, did they, sir? They just killed her.”

"I don't think I'm...qualified to go through it with you but...I can get a counsellor here if you want to talk, just please take the time you need."

She nodded, still looked down and with closed eyes, although a small tear drop managed to get through. David placed his hand just below her left shoulder.

"I'll urhm...make that call for you..."

"Thank you, sir." She opened her eyes and tried to get a smile out, "Just so you know, I prefer you over the Commodore."

David laughed lightly,

"Hey, who doesn't?"

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## 4

Surely enough, another day ended and one more began with the arrival of the large Starfleet Engineering team. When someone commented to Chloe that Starfleet was finally helping, she dismissed it as a landlord being contractually obliged to help their tenant. When she went to greet them in the shuttlebay, she was instead passed by the engineering team as she tried to enter the bay. Once they had passed, she noticed that Jones, Wright and O'Neill were already there.

"Sorry, Administrator, I did call for us to be here five minutes ago." Jones remarked as he brushed past.

"Obviously I didn't get the message..! Maybe you should get one of those guys to check the comm system in my room!" She angrily shouted after him, forcing David to tell her to try to relax as they were only here to make a lot of problems right around the Asteroid Field.

Nevertheless, the Engineering teams began their work in collaboration with Sh'ral and Riley, who were still galaxies apart from each other in terms of personality. They started by repairing the central turbolift shaft and also fitting the new long-anticipated shield grid. A team was also dispatched to the Casino station, at the special request of Harper to get Omarg off her back – and his pieced together 'Ferengi Union' consisting of a few of his underpaid workers.

Over the next few days, there was a large disruption around Pioneer Station but eventually it was obviously for the better. The computer was starting to respond logically again, the turbolifts were no longer congested and sending people to the wrong locations. All the shuttlebays were now pressurised, allowing for increased traffic flow.

The security teams that swept the station under Casey's command kept order between the 'disgruntled' Xai diplomats and the 'stubborn' Starfleet commanders present. Adria had been re-accepted into the Diplomatic Corp, O'Neill finalised his one-year terms for his position on the station and Crewman Pallet had set regular sessions with a station counsellor to deal with the loss of her sister.

Things seemed to be levelling out and settling down, well, apart from one thing. Commodore Jones was still lording it over, as though he had self-proclaimed himself as head of the station. The only person who Chloe could seem to confide in with the matter anymore was Adria. O'Neill was silently dismissing the issue, Riley and Sh'ral were too busy on the maintenance and Admiral Wright refused to talk.

When Roxanne came to her with the theory that Starfleet may be involved in a cover up with the President, her fears were about to be confirmed.

"We know what Wright did already," she began to piece it all together with Roxanne and Adria in her quarters, "but I vaguely remember something else. When I was on the Trizor ship they were filling my head with all kinds of images. Some disturbing, others...well...remotely pleasurable. But anyway, just after I first woke up there...one of the Trizor officers was having a conversation..."

*"If you do not find this 'Wright' – we will take more than we came for, as you were warned. "*

*"We didn't know of this until Wright to-"*

*"I do not care if you knew it or not, that was the agreement and we will stick to it."*

*"But if you take Asteroid B-"*

*"Enough, Venn of Vulcan!"*

Chloe explained to the others how she knew Admiral Venn was Head of Starfleet Intelligence but couldn't be sure if what she heard was actually real or not. The drifting in and out of consciousness didn't help.

Adria and Roxanne sat in silence when she had revealed what she knew. They both were trying to consider how deep it went. With the President, Wright and Venn now included, did Commodore Jones know? Did the replacement for Admiral Jenkins know? Hell, did Jenkins and Robertson both know before the second ship arrived?

Adria shook her head and got to her feet, provoking the other two to look at her curiously.

"Alright look. So what, right? The Trizor needed help to survive. Wright provided an unethical solution, but it got them off our backs for a while, yeah? They come back, try

duplicating Chloe, O'Neill and Casey kick ass and get rid of them and now Starfleet and the Government just don't want the public to find out."

"Yeah, but how far are they willing to go? Robertson obviously knew something and less than a day after he tried to warn David, Asteroid Base: Alpha is taken by them. Now you're here and everyone on this station witnessed what happened. Admiral Jenkins was replaced and now Commodore Jones has effectively taken command here. They will try to get rid of us. We know too much, it's just the way it works."

"James got away." Roxanne piped up, "Maybe they will be able to do something now we have you as evidence."

"That's the thing Rox, all they would have, all you have, is my word."

"Well what can we do?"

"For now...wait and see...if Starfleet does try to do something to get rid of us, then suddenly we have an Asteroid Field full of witnesses of various alien species."

"And then?"

"We go to the Federation Council."

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David groaned. The monitor next to his bed had turned itself on. It was Jones' morning broadcast. He didn't mind when Chloe informally addressed the station at a reasonable hour. But this was something else.

"Good Morning Pioneer Station, I am happy to report that the station's infrastructure is now entirely safe and secure thanks to the Starfleet crews that have been hard at work this week. We have been lucky, the special alloy that Pioneer is comprised of held off the effects of the Supernova quite well.

I'm sorry that Administrator Harper is not available yet again today, but she is currently occupied elsewhere. Something else you may all be interested in is that one of the mining outpost's workers have gone on strike due to..."

David threw his pillow at the screen, hard enough to turn the viewer off. He had realised that he had got a meeting planned with Jones and was told to meet him after his little podcast.

He stumbled out of bed and stood, leaning from side to side and still part in his uniform, wishing he got more sleep.

"Oh well...off to see the Wizard."

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Once more he agreed with himself that the Jefferies tubes were too cramped. Paul had once been on an Akira class starship, after being asked by Chloe to go with her to the Xai homeworld. That ship had tubes you could actually walk through, nowhere near as detrimental as crawling about on his hands and knees. He wasn't even supposed to be doing it. He just *had* to be 'volunteered' to help out the Starfleet teams.

"Junction 34....35..." he muttered, watching out for Junction **47** and gladly speeding up. "Sh'ral should be doing this...not forcing my hand up in the air like that.....41.....42.....43"

He estimated the distance until he reached Junction 47, but there was a problem. The adjacent hatch into it was sealed. He tapped the controls but nothing happened.

"Computer, open this hatch?"

"Unable to comply."

"Why not?"

"Evacuate."

"Pardon?"

"Evacuate."

"Why? Why evacuate?!" He asked, now shouting and turning round in the tube.

"Evacuate!"

"Alright, alright!" He began crawling again back the way he came but suddenly he was pulled back as the air in the tube thrust him in reverse and shot down his throat making it difficult to breathe.

Junction 47 had opened up to reveal a hull breach, exposing the tube to space.

"This is Riley! I need help now! Seal Junction 47, seal Junction 47!" He could speak no longer, feeling the air around him begin to dissipate.

The remaining air was now visible, blowing past him in misty clouds at full speed. As the force began to take hold, Paul grabbed hold of one of the small metallic bars on the side and kept his hands wrapped around it as hard as he could, considering reaching for the next and 'climbing' along. But he knew that by the time he reached the other end – the oxygen would be gone.

....

Chloe was becoming increasingly frustrated each day. Within a week she had been taken out off the ambassadorial team, overruled on countless decisions, was no longer being consulted on changes around the station and now was being called left right and centre to

deal with issues that the Commodore was 'too busy' to see. Now she was hurrying along to Sickbay, called to an emergency situation that she had to be apprised about. She wouldn't have been surprised if it was yet another excuse to get her out of her office so that Jones and Wright could set up even more changes without her 'needing to know.'

She paused along the way to have a quick chat with Omarg.

"Omarg...about that 21<sup>st</sup> Century Night you were proposing a few weeks ago."

"The one you said would never happen?"

"Right."

"Yes, what about it?"

"I want you to organise it...for tonight."

"Are you kidding? That will mean I'll have to get all your Earth artefacts shipped up here in no time at all. Your...phones that are mobile and music that pops."

"Pop music, Omarg."

"Yes yes yes....I'll need access to all the shuttlebays to make it happen, though!"

"Fine, whatever you need."

"Erm, administrator, won't the charming Commodore need to know about this? Not to mention all the fuss and music and loud banging noises all night long?"

"I'm the head of the station no matter who he thinks he is. Have fun."

Omarg grinned and ran off as Chloe disappeared round the corner. He had a feeling that it was going to be a good night to make quite a bit of profit.

Chloe on the other hand had just entered Sickbay and was shocked by the sight of Riley motionless on the far biobed, with Sh'ral and Dr. Sinclair over him.

"Doctor...?" She picked up the pace traversing the room, "Is he alright?"

"For the time being," He responded, continuing to scan Paul, "It was close, if Cmdr. Sh'ral here didn't close that junction when he did..."

"..Wait! What junction? Sh'ral what happened?"

Sh'ral was looking grim watching the doctor work on Riley,

"He was asked to check out a power fluxuation in Junction 47 on Deck 8. I felt guilty about sending him down there alone so I went after him. I must have been crawling for about...five minutes when I started being dragged down the Jefferies tube without help. I managed to secure myself at a corner and looked round to see him holding on to the side....trying to stop himself being pulled out into space."

"A hull breach?"

"Sure looked like it, Administrator," He looked at Riley and amended himself, "Chloe."

"I suppose you got him out of there?"

"...I managed to access an override panel nearby and closed the hatch. But when I got to him he had passed out, it was close but...managed to get transported to Sickbay after that."

The Andorian was taken aback when he felt her arms wrap around him. He cleared his throat and tried to stand up straight.

"Thank you, Sh'ral," she muttered, letting him go.

"Well, I was...just...just there."

They both smiled and looked to the Doctor who had announced that Paul should be back on his feet in no time.

"Great," Harper remarked, "In time for Omarg's...social gathering."

Sh'ral's eyes widened and jaw dropped slightly,

"..Chloe..?"

"You'll see...but in the meantime, find out why no-one detected that breach!"

"I'll get right on it."

....

"Commodore, you wished to see me sir?"

"Yes, yes, come In David, let's have a little chat."

O'Neill looked around; the room had changed since he was last in it, which was not that long ago. The collection of fictitious novels around the desk were gone and now lined up on various newly installed shelves. Chloe's laptop was folded up and cast aside on the sofa while Jones' computer lay isolated in pristine condition next to a neat stack of PaDDs.

"If you don't mind me asking, sir," he let out a little joint laugh and a sigh in confusion, "Is this still Administrator Harper's office?"

"Of course it is, Commander, now let's get down to it, shall we?"

"Down to what, sir?" David sat down, puzzled at the quick change of subject,

"Pioneer Station of course. With the new shield and weapons grid installed, this is now practically a Starfleet-run station."

"Many would disagree."

"I know, but they can't deny it and back it up. I have no intention of handing over these defensive systems to the civilian Government. We haven't done so with the Asteroid Field weapons platforms so we wouldn't be doing it here, either."

"...And how do you intend to compensate for that...sir?"

Jones pushed back his chair, got to his feet and turned to face out of the window,

“Ask me in a few hours time.”

....

## 5

But in those few hours time, David would not be called back to Deck One, but instead to the messhall on the orders of Admiral Wright to address an apparent disturbance to the peace travelling throughout the station. On his way with Ruby and Casey, the three couldn't help but notice that apart from a few Starfleet Security officers, there didn't seem to be anyone in sight. When they reached Deck Two, they found out why.

Every room on the deck was opened up with people moving in between each with strange looking items while a female singer's voice was clearly heard coming from the messhall and echoing across the deck.

“Did we miss a memo?” Casey asked, moving out of the way for a group of people carrying rectangular communication devices known as Mobile Phones.

“I think we missed quite a few...” Ruby added, now perusing a doorway into a large room with casual clothes hanging from racks. David took one look and realised something.

“We've either stepped back in time to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century or Omarg is having his “ancient” Earth revival night. “

He looked round to realise that both Ruby and Casey were gone, although he was sure he could see the top of the tall officer's head in what appeared to be a military store.

O'Neill sighed and tugged at his equipment belt to keep it tight, not trusting the crowd of beings he would have to pass through to reach the messhall in order to find Omarg. Something which slipped through his mind as he forced his way to the once more overcrowded dining area was that the singer's voice was becoming more and more familiar.

Just imagine how close his jaw came to hitting the floor when he spotted the singer in a wavy purple dress and shiny, black high-heeled shoes up on the makeshift stage in front of the windows. Then imagine how his jaw almost came off his skull when he recognised both the voice and the face – it was Chloe.

He backed up against the wall when the music began to build up, realising that all hell was about to break loose in front of him.

Chloe stepped back from the mic and then approached it again when the music reached its climax.

“..Cause you’re hot and you’re cold,  
You’re yes and you’re no,  
You’re in then you’re out,  
You’re up and you’re down!  
It’s black and it’s white, it wrong and its right,  
We fight, we break up  
We kiss – we make up..!”

O’Neill recognized the song from Chloe’s old Earth music database he had looked through when he was left in charge after suggesting she get some sleep that day. He believed it was either called ‘Cold then Hot’ or ‘Hot n Cold’ – one or the other. Nevertheless, he was now almost being slammed against the wall as the jumping began amongst the dancers – which now included Ruby. He was glad to see her happy and enjoying herself, but wasn’t very glad to be in the current position he was in – for one, he didn’t dance.

It would take at least fifteen for Chloe to finish other songs, although someone else immediately took over after an introduction by Omarg. O’Neill had waved her over and the two had moved to one of the quieter room – a former crew quarters in fact, now converted into fabric shop, not that anyone was buying.

They brought drinks with them and had put them down on what appeared to be a faux leopard skin rug covering the low level coffee table in the centre of the room. Chloe was led on the top of one of the bunk beds while David sat up on the bottom bunk of the set next to hers.

“Jones sent us to find out what all the fuss was about...I think he was having trouble concentrating on modifying the weapons systems command code. More specifically...he wanted me to stop it.”

“Will you? Stop it, I mean.”

“I’d have to fight my way through 99% of the station’s population including my own security team to do that. I think I’ll...wait it out.”

Although he couldn’t see her, he heard Chloe laugh above and in front of him.

“I know you’re right, I was too afraid to say it.”

“...about what?”

“Jones...Wright...Starfleet. They’re interfering in places they have no right to. Wright has obviously been forced to play along, Jones is taking over piece by piece and neither Starfleet or the Federation seems to realize what’s going on. But if you’re right about the President then...I’m sorry for ignoring it. But I couldn’t just walk in accusing him of things.”

“It’s alright, David, I don’t blame you. You have a job to do.”

“...And so do you. But I expect it’s becoming harder to do.”

“You’re right about that.”

David started to feel weird and looked at his mostly empty glass on the table.

“Chloe...?”

“Yeah?”

“What have we been drinking?”

“Romulan Ale.”

“Oh...I’m sure they had loads of that on Earth back then...”

There was a moment of silence before both began laughing. Unfortunately it was brought to a sudden halt when Max came on the comm channel asking for Harper to meet him in her own office immediately. David groaned, worried that she will take the blame for his own refusal to follow orders. But she jumped down off the bed, still cheerful, making a note to David not to worry as she’s through with letting Jones push her around.

But as she was walking through the open doorway into the corridor, he noticed a glimmer of worry in her own eyes.

“Chloe...!” He shouted to stop her, “...You look beautiful tonight...”

She smiled and said thanks before proceeding out towards the turbolift, providing she could make it through the crowds.

....

“Your reactions are remarkable for a man who was almost thrown out into space.” Sh’ral remarked as he had the pile of cards pulled away from him with a distinct shout of ‘snap’ from Riley, now led up on the Biobed.

Paul grinned and shuffled his growing collection,

“Chloe isn’t annoyed I couldn’t make it tonight is she?”

“I don’t expect so, she’s one to understand near death experiences, you know.”

“...It isn’t my fault I’m still here anyway. It’s that new doctor bloke, won’t let me leave yet...wasn’t he the one who said I could leave soon?”

“Uh-huh.”

They continued to play, with Sh’ral’s losing becoming a recurring event, until interrupted by Adria. She went through the routine of asking Paul if he was alright but then her demeanor changed.

“I’ve just been with Commodore Jones...” She sighed, “Prepare yourselves for a bit of a shock.”

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....

When Chloe let herself into her office, the first thing that she noticed was the various boxes around the room. Suddenly she was smiling at the very prospect of Jones packing up to leave.

But when Max saw her, he only seemed amused,

“Put a new dress code in place, Administrator?” He snared, “I’ll be sure to be wearing my Dress Uniform the next time to see me.”

Chloe rolled her eyes slowly, tilting her head towards the now-repaired display screen on her left and then back to Jones.

“Do you want something, Commodore? I do hope you’re not leaving.”

“Then you’re in luck...as it’s quite the opposite.”

She immediately became downhearted,

“What do you mean?”

“This station...this...whole Asteroid Field Operation is now a shambles. A mess. A disaster. I intend to put that right. Things have got too slack on this station, even for a majority civilian crew.

“We’re doing what we can...but it’s quite hard when-“

“No...you’re not doing what you can, obviously,” remarking her current appearance, “While you’ve been busy breaking your own rules and distracting my officers, I’ve been making a few calls.”

“What kind of calls?”

Max placed both of his hands atop of the desk and stared right through her.

“I have made a formal request for a permanent position on this station as...shall we say, Executive Administrator. The request has been granted and several transport ships are already on their way. This will soon be...a Starfleet majority crew.”

Chloe stepped forward, brimming with fury, albeit primarily from the drink,

“You can’t do this...!”

“Yes, Administrator, I can. You will find your belongings in the boxes and other containers now scattered around the room. I’ll have them sent down to your quarters which you will have to make do as a makeshift office.”

Realizing that she no longer had a communications device on her, she turned for the door. After a single step into Operations, she spun round on her heel, intending to protest further. But the doors slid shut an inch in front of her face.

She was now face to face with the ironic words, ‘Chloe Harper – Administrator’ imprinted on the door.

**\*\*\*\***

**Commodore Jones has Pioneer Station in the palm of one hand and Admiral Wright is nothing but his puppet on a string in his other.**

**As Max begins to take over, O'Neill accepts that he has to make a decision, his long-serving career under a seemingly corrupt leadership or his loyalty and respect to his none-military friends?**

**Poor Riley becomes the victim of a trap set by the unorthodox Vulcan, Admiral Venn as President G'rath decides to pick off the witnesses one by one and both Chloe and Adria are in line to be next.**

**While Casey, Ruby, Sh'ral and Brent must all consider the consequences of joining with either side of the power struggle in the Asteroid Field, events begin to unfold in ways they were never destined to.**

**All this and more when Star Trek: Asteroid Field returns with 'The Old Divide'... in the New Year!**