

Prologue

2323, the Accobar-Tyrella Asteroid Field is occupied by Starfleet forces, Asteroid Base: Alpha is formed.

2385, Asteroid Field Operations begin with the Klingon mining outposts. Pioneer Station is built using Alien alloys. The Asteroid Field was taken by Ban'mar forces, Pioneer Station was not evacuated in time.

2386, a Ban'mar soldier is studied on Pioneer Station under controlled conditions before being executed by Starfleet.

2387, the Hobos star implodes, devastating Asteroid Field operations.

2388, Starfleet has taken full control of Pioneer Station and is attempting to keep the residents quiet regarding a conspiracy involving a mysterious species known as the Trizor.

In the story of Asteroid Base: Alpha, history shows that the Trizor never appeared. In fact, in many stories, the Trizor never existed. Something has changed and history has been altered. As a result, many will face the consequences. Jeffery Keegan should still be in command of Pioneer Station, Asteroid Base: Alpha should be battling a mirror version of itself in the Briar Patch, Jasmine Thomas should be far into Deep Space under the command of Admiral Jenkins, Chloe Harper should be set to take command of Asteroid Base: Beta and Max Jones should be in prison.

Time is a strange and powerful force, one which is quite good at healing itself when things go wrong.

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Chloe screamed for the Ops crew to brace for impact as the Trizor beam tore into the hull, shredding their armour apart. The armoured hull plating was literally ripped off the station and pelted off into space. Deck after deck began to feel the effects of the destructive weapon now that the Trizor layer was gone. The recently installed phase cannons lining the standard hull layer overloaded one after one, setting off chain reactions throughout the station.

O'Neill was a victim of this. He was thrown away from the tactical console as feedback from the destruction obliterated his Ops station. Sparks and debris flung him back into a corner, knocking two other crewmen off their feet.

"Medical team to Ops, stat!" Chloe barked over the comm channel, rushing over to check his pulse. She could hear Ensign Swan from Engineering call out that the Trizor weapon would be recharged in thirty seconds. Checking David's pulse, she couldn't find one, and the state of his body was not a pretty sight.

"Where the hell is that Andorian you sent to Accobar Three?!" Robertson shouted, watching the time decrease before the weapon would fire again. "David said that they were meant to be back hours ago!"

"I know that!" Chloe angrily replied, "We can't assume they will make it in time...Computer! Evacuation Order 1 dash 2!"

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24 Hours Earlier

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"You can't come in here and make demands from me, Commander, you should know your place."

"Oh please, Mr. President, if I was in charge, I'd have enough on you to have you shot."

"Is that a threat, Commander?"

"Only if you force to be one."

Venn loudly cleared his throat, bringing silence between James and G'rath in the soundproof room.

"Mr. Robertson, what exactly is it you want?"

"I know you're sending a division of ships to the Asteroid Field, and before you get clever, we all know which Asteroid Field."

"Ships come and go from the Accobar field every day, Commander."

"Yes but not usually ones intent on making people disappear."

"Excuse me?"

"I know what this Government is capable of. I know what Starfleet is capable of. When I was on the Hazard Team, I once helped you people make someone 'disappear.' It made me sick to my stomach but I did it. But this... this is personal... and wrong. You caused this problem, you're to blame. Destroying Pioneer Station won't help your cause."

Venn was about to defend himself, but G'rath was confident enough to let a little truth slip, much to the Vulcan's dismay.

"We're not going to destroy Pioneer Station, Commander Robertson, we've got a little help when it comes to that."

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"Well I have to hand it to you, Omarg!" Chloe shouted across the bar, "You've put on a hell of a show tonight..this morning..whatever..!"

"Well it's all in the interest of profit of course.."

"Yes! Of Course!"

"Why did erm...why did Commander Robertson just interrupt the President's speech by the way?!"

"Not a clue! I'll let you know as soon as I know something!" She lied.

In one of the closed maintenance bays, Ruby and Jasmine let themselves in to talk. The shuttle in the centre of the room was mostly stripped apart, but it was obvious that whoever was working on it left in a hurry. For all they knew it was like that before the Supernova.

Ruby stopped walking and turned around to face Jas.

"So...you work for a criminal, lie to me, go on your little secret 'recon' missions around the station...why?"

"No! Claire Jenkins is not the criminal in this.."

"Oh...so the rogue Admiral who doesn't report for duty, steals a ship and evades capture isn't at fault?"

"No...! She's only doing what she's doing because she knows what Max Jones is actually like."

"Tell me then...what is Max Jones actually like?"

"Oh don't you see, Ruby! Don't you ever wonder why things are just going on as normal around here, despite learning that Admiral Wright organised the kidnapping of two people to give to the Trizor? Hell, the same week, he was back on the station like nothing ever happened!"

"He didn't have much of a choice...it was either one person at a time or the whole human race. Admiral Wright saved us..."

"Yes, he might have done, but he couldn't have covered that up. A Trizor ship almost reached Earth, someone would have noticed."

"What are you saying, Jas?"

"I'm saying that Starfleet...maybe even the President..knows what happened. They're trying to cover it up! Why else would an **actual** former rogue Admiral be put in charge"

"What do you mean, former rogue admiral?"

"Oh don't they tell you anything in this place?!"

"Don't take it out on me!"

Ruby crossed her arms and turned away. Jasmine sighed in annoyance but apologised.
“Look, Ruby..it’s just a delicate situation alright...one that we can’t afford to shout about next to a hall full of people.”

“Then just tell me,” Ruby whispered, coming closer, “What did Jones do?”

“He.. He ordered the attack on the Romulan colony known as Idara.”

“What? But..but he isn’t even an Admiral now..how... and it was Commodore Quay’s decision-“

“To start the orbital bombardment? No. Jones ordered him to on the apparent authority of Starfleet Command and Federation Council. To this day, no such record of that authority exists. He gave the order without any consultation. As for his rank...well..he was relieved of duty, thrown in prison for years..”

Ruby’s mouth was now partially open. Every conflict that had happened in the Asteroid Field now led to one man. Max Jones had caused the Cult of Romulus conflict, which grabbed the attention of the Ban’mar Consortium. The war, the losses, the devastation of multiple worlds across the Federation. The occupation of Trill, the resurrection of Sel’tar...it all landed at his feet.

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Riley tapped his fingers on the cold slab he was given for a cell at Starbase 234. He had insisted to the guard outside that he wouldn’t try to blow a hole in the wall, not that it did him much good. He wondered what he had ever done to deserve this treatment. He had always tried to be nice to people, and stayed on the right track.

Something which comforted him, however, was thinking that Chloe wouldn’t believe that he was capable or willing to do such a thing which would put so many lives in danger. But it wasn’t Administrator Harper who would be making any positive findings for his case, but it was O’Neill.

David was still in the armoury on Pioneer Station, watching the fragmented log scroll through the screen over and over again, making sure that what he was seeing was correct. Despite his previous promise, he hadn’t left for the shuttlebay at all since finding it. Sh’ral confirmed that the file was genuine.

“Are you sure, Sh’ral?”

“Yes, Commander...I’ve triple checked like you asked.”

“So Riley’s lifesign was imprinted over the old one?”

“Yes... he didn’t do it, sir.”

“... and the old signature?” David asked reluctantly, “Who actually did it..?”

“Brent, sir, Jason Brent.”

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"Where is Admiral Jenkins, Commander?" Venn sneered, frustrated that they still had someone on the run, probably up to no good.

"Why would I tell you? So you can arrest her for treason?" Robertson replied.

"All of this is for the greater good of the Federation. If people were to learn that a group of monsters wish to dissect us and could arrive at any moment in a ship the size of a planet... there might be a slight panic." G'rath interrupted sarcastically, "So tell us where she is... and we can put an end to this."

Robertson laughed and headed towards the door, but Venn called out to him to stop. But James laughed against and shrugged off G'rath's last comment.

"We all know how this ends, Sir," he added with emphasis, "With the destruction of Asteroid Field Operations. You call off your ships...and Jones... and maybe I don't walk out that door and tell everyone the truth.

"How's Doctor May, Commander?" Venn asked, apparently randomly, puzzling Robertson.

"Fine... I suppose."

"Not seen him for a while have you?"

"You know the answer to that...what are you getting at?"

"Brian May, Adria Thomas and the other remaining crew from Asteroid Base: Alpha are sharing cells near one, Paul Riley, at Starbase 234."

"What?"

"A security team is also on call to take Roxanne Swan at a moment's notice."

"On what charge?!"

"Conspiracy to overthrow the Government."

"What!?"

Venn slowly walked around the triangle desk in the room and tapped a preset control on the wall terminal. An image fuzzed into view of Chloe, David, Adria, Roxanne and Brian discussing Jones and having to 'do something about him and the President.'

"Why it seems, Commander, we have proof, while you have nothing but your word and that of a known traitor. Still feel like taking a walk?"

"Yes actually."

"Why's that?"

"Because this entire conversation has just been broadcasted into that hall."

He pointed to the camera system in the top corner of the room.

"But this is a private room!" G'rath exclaimed.

"I called ahead a few favours before I arrived. You don't have a choice...release those officers, call off the attack, and put Chloe Harper back in command, and by all accounts, Max Jones should be back in prison."

Venn and G'rath were silent, knowing they had just lost, and there was an obvious uproar outside the doors. But it didn't take long for Venn to begin tapping at the controls, disabling the video feed and opening a channel to Commodore Jones' office and the attack fleet.

Before Robertson pushed G'rath aside and opened the doors, he potentially former President managed to blurt out the words:

"I want that station **DESTROYED!**"

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In the ready room of the Station, Jones received G'rath's message. Although it was frantic and obviously pressured going off the muffled voices afterwards, he intended to proceed.

"Computer." He said, with the computer responding with a subtle double-beep.

"Initiate the Self Destruct sequence, authorisation Jones FX-Delta Six."

"Acknowledged."

"Set time at 23 hours and initiate silent countdown procedures. Mute voice warnings and no visual countdown displays."

"Acknowledged."

"Enable."

He pressed his comm badge to sync the time with the computer, but also initiated a constant sensor sweep in the room to warn him of any intruders.

"Open a secure channel to Attack group Omega."

"Link established."

"Jones to the fleet, proceed into the Accobar System, once you arrive in range of the Asteroid Field, begin your sweep on designated targets. I will be leaving in a shuttlecraft in the next few hours and will rendezvous with an escort from Starbase 234. Please note the self destruct has been activated as a failsafe. Good Luck."

He closed the channel, looked around the room and then headed out to see about arranging a shuttle for 'classified' business. But as he passed through Ops and departed in the turbolift, moments later, Jasmine Thomas arrived in another.

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Jasmine entered the Ready Room which Jones had left unlocked, believing he would never enter it again and proceeded to browse through the comm. logs, but was shocked to the core when the doors opened. It was Jones, his alarm had already tipped him off, and he looked nothing short than menacing. The room was still dark, but he was clearly visible with the backdrop light of an emptied Operations. Jasmine immediately reached for her phaser, now knowing what he is fully capable of, but she didn't have her equipment belt.

"You should have stayed at the party, Thomas!" He boomed, fully raged and lunging towards her. She tried to dive out of the way but he was too quick for her. Before she could react, her face was slammed against the transparent Trizor steel making up the window. She tried to scream but was forcefully turned around and had his sweaty palm pushed down on her mouth. He moved behind her, grabbing her arms and forcing her down onto the desk.

"Now then..." He panted, "What do we do with a no good spy like you!?"

However, knowing that something wasn't right, Ruby had followed her from the shuttlebay, and entered Ops. Looking around, there was no-one. She was about to leave when muffled screams could be heard from the ready room.

"Jasmine!" She shrieked, rushing over in high heels to the door, which was still unlocked. When she entered, Jones did not noticed, he was focused on strangling the life out of the weakening officer in his grasp. Ruby shrieked and panicked. Taking the hyper spanner from the engineering compartment under the door control, she ran towards Max and hit it as hard as she could into his skull.

She dropped the spanner as the Commodore's now limp body fell to the floor behind the desk. Jasmine gasped for air, staggering towards Ruby and falling into her shaking arms, trying to calm her. Jasmine held Ruby for a few seconds but suddenly screamed as Ruby's leg was grabbed by Jones and she was pulled down towards him.

"You interfering bitch!" He shouted, now climbing on top of her, losing all control, attacking her. But Jasmine too lost all her senses at the very sight in front of her. She grabbed the blooded hyper spanner and flung it down onto Jones, knocking him down once more. But she didn't stop. She hit him again and again as Ruby screamed for her to stop through flowing tears.

But by the time Jasmine had backed into a corner, Ruby had checked his pulse. But the pool of blood was evidence enough. He was dead.

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"Chloe, Chloe!" David shouted, running along Deck Three, with Sh'ral in tow. He was trying to catch Harper before she entered her quarters. She turned, surprised to see him.

"What's up, Commander? Another crew member arrested, perhaps?"

"No... but it's about that--"

"We know Riley didn't do it!" Sh'ral blustered out, interrupting David.

"I know." Chloe muttered.

"We found a...what?" David continued, but then taken aback.

"I know Riley didn't do it..."

"What?!" David and Sh'ral shouted

"G'rath and Venn just admitted to falsely accusing the AB: Alpha crew and Riley...they're being set free and sent back here. Commodore Jones is also here on... invalid terms... I expect he will be leaving."

The security chief and the Andorian stood, shocked and yet pleasantly surprised.

"Well..." David started, "This is good news..! It looks like things can finally get back to normal around here!"

But he spoke too soon, the station rocked and an LCARS terminal blew out further down the corridor. The red alert lights flew on and the alarm sounded.

"Oh Come On!" All three of them exclaimed, before running to their posts.

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As G'rath and Venn were escorted through the crowds of disgruntled and frantic press, Robertson stood near the podium in the hall, self satisfied. But he received a call from the shuttle he had come in, which was currently in orbit.

"Go ahead." He asked,

"Commander Robertson, sir, we received a call from Admiral Jenkins. The ships have resumed their course for the Asteroid Field."

"Relay them the information about what just happened, Ensign, that should stop them. If they don't stop, she knows what to do."

"Yes Sir, understood, but there's something else..."

"Go for it."

"Pioneer Station is under attack, sir..."

"What?! By who?"

"You're not going to believe **this**..."

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"You're not going to believe this, Chloe!" O'Neill shouted out, manning his post. "It's an Hirogen scout ship!"

"What?!" Harper shouted in disbelief, "On screen!"

O'Neill complied and put the image of the Hirogen ship on screen.

"They've ceased fire and... are hailing us."

"Open a channel."

He did so, and sighed deeply as the main viewer formed into the face of an Hirogen hunter in full gear at the controls of the ship. Chloe stepped down from the elevated platform on which the command chairs were placed and looked towards the hunter.

"This is Chloe Jane Harper of the Asteroid Field Project station Pioneer. What is the meaning of this attack...and your presence in this quadrant?"

"Where we venture is no concern of yours. You will tell us the location of Asteroid Base: Alpha and we shall then depart."

"I'm not privy to the location of that Starfleet outpost. Now why are you..."

"If you will not tell us the location of our prey then you will be substituted in its stead. "

"Excuse me?"

Her response came with another round of fire from the scout ship.

"This may have been a civilian station but I assure you we are now heavily armed and prepared to defend ourselves."

"Ha ha, your defensive and offences capabilities are no much for our own."

Chloe crossed her arms, believing that to be a lie, but David sprung a revelation on her.

“Uhrm...former administrator..!”

“Yes...David...I’m quite busy speaking to the lovely gentleman.”

“Their weapons and shields have been augmented with Starfleet tech...and Ban’mar tech.”

Chloe turned back to the screen in time to see the display vanish. She asked the computer if Jones was in his office, but he apparently was not.

“Oh trust him to run at the first sign of trouble! You know I wouldn’t be surprised if he set this up...Harper to Engineering!”

“Sh’ral here!”

“Divert power from none essential systems to the Shields and bring the tactical grid online.”

“Yes Ma’am!”

Chloe ordered David to bring out the pulse phaser cannons. As he worked at his controls, large clunking sounds indicating that they were pulling out from their bays across the Trizor-armoured hull.

“I swore I would never have to say this on this station...” Chloe told the station as she took her command seat, “But...it seems I have no choice... Battle stations!”

She looked over at David, who nodded at her, indicating that she could add a little bit to the end.

“Also...Jason Brent report to Ops immediately.”

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While the new day on Pioneer Station was starting worse than the previous had ended, things were looking up on transport ship 113, which was taking Riley, Adria, May, and several other Asteroid Base: Alpha personnel back to the Asteroid Field.

On the way, they had watched an Attack Fleet pass by in the opposite direction back to Starbase 234, being escorted by the USS Knight – Jenkins’ ship.

“Soo...Adria...” Riley slurred, still mildly feeling the effects of a sedative he had been given on the Starbase, “What did they drag...you...in for?”

“Uhrm, plotting to kill the President.”

“Were you going to...kill the President?”

“So what about you?” She quickly changed the subject, “Why was the trustworthy Riley brought in?”

"For almost killing myself."

"I see..."

"No... no you don't! That Andorian on that station can't live without me! Without Riley...Sh'ral is no-one...just a shell, an unemotional yet intelligent shell. You know what! He's like a Vulcan without me...but a Ferengi with me! Do you know what I mean?"

"No."

"Then screw you too!"

Brian took hold of Riley's head and swirled it round slightly, which drifted the Operations Officer off to sleep, to the delight of some of the other passengers.

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Jason strolled into Operations and was quickly grabbed by Casey, who grunted when Jason tried to force himself free.

"Mr Brent, welcome to Operations!" Chloe shouted as Sh'ral also entered, who decided to remind him that he set Riley up.

The weapons specialist didn't bother to deny it. He threw up his arms after breaking free and confessed.

"I just follow orders...unlike you." He added to O'Neill, trying to keep the Hirogen at bay. Chloe held onto a railing as the station shook again but reminded Jason that at least David was following the right kind of orders, unlike him.

"Take him away!" She commanded, putting her attention back to the ongoing battle.

"Do you really wanna do this Chloe?!" He protested, "Jones gave us a second chance! You're just going to throw it away just because you didn't like the man!"

"No Jason... I just don't like you." She whimpered, "Now, Casey!"

Casey obeyed and pulled Brent out the room, leading him to the Brig, not noticing the unlocked access hatch at his feet. Inside it was the lifeless body of the supposed Commanding Officer of the station – missing a comm badge.

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Ruby grabbed hold of Jasmine as the station shook again. The lights on the desk began to flicker but they were almost at her quarters. She could hear her friend mutter phrases such as "it was his fault." To concerned passersby she lied to them, saying that Jasmine had been hit by a small explosion and was being taken to Sickbay – trying to cover up the blood on her hands.

When they got inside Ruby's quarters, another blast from the Hirogen ship knocked them both to the ground. Ruby fell on Jasmine's back, prompting her to panic and push her off.

Ruby sighed and looked up at her, obviously still in shock.

"You're supposed to be the strong one!" She shouted, trying to get her voice above the weapons fire now emanating from Pioneer Station, "You were supposed to spy on him, not kill him!"

"What if they find him? What then Ruby?!"

"Jenkins.. she sent you here she can clean up the mess!"

"We can't tell Starfleet! Are you mad?!"

"Jones was a rogue. He did things without authorisation and worked for a corrupted Government. He tried to attack you, even kill you! They'll understand that.."

"No they won't, Ruby... I could have stopped myself."

"Then why didn't you...?"

"You, alright! I just... couldn't stand to see him hurting you like that."

Ruby crouched down beside her and put Jasmine's head on her shoulder.

"Jas... that won't hold up in court."

"That's why we can't tell anyone..."

"We can't just leave the body of a Starfleet Commodore to rot just outside Ops. Eventually Sh'ral or Riley might need to open up that hatch and get inside."

"I know, I know!"

"Then what are we going to do?!"

She took Jasmine's head in her hands and looked at her, but when a scream came from behind she let go. The doors were still open and an officer had got caught in an overload just down the corridor. Ruby got up and headed to the door.

"Stay here.. just... I'll try and get you off the station..... I love you, you do know that.."

"Yeah... I'm sorry..."

Ruby forced a weak smile and then left to help the crewman, making sure the doors were closed this time.

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"Miss Harper..! Miss Harper..!" Roxanne shouted, rushing through Operations to Chloe, who was at the Operations station.

Not hearing her, Chloe shouted to David that Junction 47 had breached again and would try to seal it off once more.

"Miss Harper! Chloe!" Finally got her attention, although by now she was just on the other side of the console.

"Yes, Roxanne... this isn't a very good time!"

"I know what the Hirogen want!"

"So do we, Asteroid Base: Alpha...but they aren't here either!"

"Yes, yes! But I think I know where Asteroid Base: Alpha is aswell!"

"What?!"

The conversation was cut short when the Hirogen Alpha appeared on the viewscreen once more.

"That wasn't me.." Chloe whimpered, moving round to the command chairs again, "What can I help you with now..?"

"This is your last chance, tell us the location of Asteroid Base: Alpha... or we will board you."

"Good Luck with that.."

"Urhmm, actually..Administr...Chloe?" David piped up from behind. Chloe turned and gestured 'what?'

"Our shields...they're almost gone.."

"Well thanks for that David..I wasn't planning on revealing that information."

She sighed and turned towards the viewscreen. The Alpha however, was laughing again. Chloe turned again in the opposite direction and glanced at Roxanne who looked hopefully towards her.

"Fine!" She said to the Hunter, "Give us one hour.. and we'll tell you where to find Asteroid Base: Alpha."

"Very well... One hour... no tricks."

The image vanished and the default screen appeared. David looked surprised and asked if they were planning to give them AB: Alpha...if they knew where it was.

"No," Chloe replied, looking at Roxanne, "But I'd like to know where it is.."

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In the cleared conference room, (Chloe) Harper, (David) O'Neill, (Roxanne) Swan, Sh'ral and an open comm link to Transport 113 (in the centre of the table on a portable monitor) were present.

“Mr. Riley, Miss. Thomas.” Roxanne acknowledged at the screen at the two faces staring back at her. Riley had reported that the shuttle was holding position in the Accobar System due to the Hirogen ship patrolling the Asteroid Field, while the other stations had been warned not to panic or engage the ship. Easier said than done for the Klingon miners.

“Proceed with your briefing, Miss Swan.” Chloe asked. Roxanne nodded and brought up several images on the screen behind her. One of Asteroid Base: Alpha, one of a planet and one of a crystalline object held in place in AB: Alpha’s Astrometrics lab.

“As some of you may or may not be aware... this “Phase Crystal” as we call it allows individuals to swap places with those in.. well... an alternate reality. Which is how you know I got to this one... when Asteroid Base: Alpha was phase shifted with another..?”

David and Adria nodded, while the others looked quite confused.

“Well... the reality I was brought back to by James Robertson... was not this one.”

“Excuse me?” Adria asked, “But I was there when it happened.”

Roxanne looked around, it didn’t seem like people were following entirely, so she decided to simplify things.

“Alright.. let’s call where we are now ‘Reality One’ and the reality I came from ‘Reality Two.’ Also, my home reality is ‘Reality Three.’ Okay? So this is what has happened so far.

I lived in Reality Three since I was born. I worked on Asteroid Base: Alpha, a much more advanced version than your own I might add. We discovered this crystal on Accobar 3. We also discovered that it could phase shift objects. When I was working on it in a shielded location, the crew from Reality Two swapped with my own.”

She paused to check if everyone was still with her. For now, they were.

“So we worked out the problem and managed to get my crew back to Reality Three and the other crew back to Reality Two. Although for personal reasons, I joined the Reality Two crew.”

She paused again, they were nodding.

“In Reality Two, I helped to get Asteroid Base: Alpha’s warp drive operational and also continued work studying the ‘Phase Crystal.’ At the start of 2387..the Hobus Star went supernova.”

“What?” David interrupted, “But that happened at the end of 2387 here..”

“Exactly,” Roxanne continued, “One moment I was working on the crystal in Reality Two, the next I was in a damaged version of Asteroid Base: Alpha and under attack from the Trizor. Adria beamed me out and then I was here.”

“What are you saying, Roxanne?” Chloe asked.

“I think I activated the crystal and was shifted to this reality...Reality One. But before I could stop the experiment, I was beamed to Pioneer Station.”

“But that would mean..”

“Yes, the Crystal wouldn’t have been disengaged. I don’t think the station was taken by the Trizor transmat beam at all. I think it was pulled into another Reality.”

Adria and Riley gasped on the other end of the comm link, while Chloe on the other hand looked more relieved than anything.

“So the Trizor don’t have Asteroid Base: Alpha? Well this is great! All you need to do is get the crystal and pull it back, right?” she asked Roxanne, hopefully. But the science officer grimaced. “Roxanne...?”

“We got the crystal before the supernova... and I’ve seen what damage it has done twice over. It hit Accobar 3 hard the first time and probably has done this time. I doubt there are any crystals of this type left down there.”

David facepalmed while Sh’ral’s eyebrows fluttered up and then down. But Chloe remained hopeful.

“Look, we don’t have much time. If you say the crystal was on that planet...then I’m assuming it’s quite durable.”

“Why?”

“Because Accobar 3 has been the target for many rogue Asteroid impacts over the years.”

“Yes but we don’t have that much time.”

“Which is what I just said, so, Sh’ral, I want you to take a handful of our Klingon friends, rendezvous with Riley in the Kingswood and head to Accobar 3.”

Sh’ral took a moment to register the information as asked “Administrator?” to the disgruntlement of Riley on the monitor, “Chloe...sorry.”

“You heard me, Commander, you’re going to find that crystal, bring Asteroid Base: Alpha back and then we’re going to get rid of that Hirogen ship and end this on-going nightmare once and for all.”

“Yes ma’am!”

“Dismissed!”

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Sh'ral and Riley were now on the Kingswood, heading towards Accobar Three. Chloe was bargaining for more time from the Hirogen. Jasmine was packing her bags and preparing to leave on the next shuttle off the station. Ruby was helping Casey prepare defensible positions on various decks and David was in the Ready Room trying to access Jones' computer and even more encrypted sensor data – a slow process without Sh'ral.

He was trying to find any indication of where he went, as no ship had picked him up before or after the Hirogen attack. So far, the only thing he had determined was that Jones wasn't the only one in the room during the New Year party. But who had paid him a visit – and why?

On Deck Six, Casey activated the last portable forcefield generator, leaving only one route to the turbolift, creating a chokepoint for the security team if the Hirogen board the station. He had noticed that Ruby was being extremely uncharacteristically quiet. At first he put it down to nerves but when all it took was a little beep to make her jump, he got concerned.

When he asked her what was wrong, she insisted that it was nothing, but he was hardly convinced.

"Casey I don't wanna talk about it!"

"Look Ruby, I'd normally respect that... but if you're distracted by something and you set one of these generators wrong..it could overload and.."

"I won't set any of them wrong.. I'm not distracted, alright?"

"No, it's not alright... has erm... something happened between you and... Jasmine?" He asked, swallowing hard afterwards.

"Why? Feeling lucky?"

"No.. no Ruby it's not like that alright. I'm a friend.. and also your senior officer so.. I need to know if you're focused or not."

He closed the lid on the Generator and asked the Engineer present to start on Deck Seven, leaving himself and Ruby alone.

"You want to play this as officers instead? I can do that. Ensign....?"

"I can't tell you."

"Why not?"

"I promised I wouldn't."

"Promised who?"

"I can't say."

"Ensign Pallet..."

"Jasmine alright... it was Jasmine."

He took a step back in his sarcastic interrogation when she began to shake slightly. It was apparent that she was upset about whatever she was hiding.

"Ruby... you can tell me."

"I can't... because as soon as you know you'll..."

"If it's something you don't want Starfleet or Administrator Harper to know then I.. I won't say a word. Just tell me and I might be able to help."

"You can't say anything...**anything**."

"You have my word."

"It was... it was Jasmine. She killed him.."

"What...? Killed.. killed who?"

"Jones...she killed Jones and I was there...in the Ready Room"

Casey released all the air from his lungs and replaced it in one painful, quiet gasp.

"Tell me this is a joke." He pleaded, "Tell me you're just making that up.."

"I knew it.. you're going to tell Starfleet aren't you."

"Not me, Ruby... but Commander O'Neill is decrypting Jones' computer as we speak.."

"So..?"

"He had the computer divert all sensor readings, inside and outside the station, directly to that laptop."

Ruby dropped the toolkit she was holding and bolted in the opposite direction.

"Ruby, wait!" Casey called after her, but she was already near the turbolift.

.....

The Kingswood was now approaching Accobar 3, and the extent of the damage to the surface was easily visible. Not only were large craters scattered around the landmass, but the small oceans and lakes visible were almost glowing from radiation – an after effect from the supernova.

Inside the ship, Riley and Sh'ral stared at the sensor readings blankly. Each one was a negative when it came to survivability rate.

"Alright lover boy..." Riley started, causing Sh'ral to raise an eyebrow, "We might be able to fit in those hazard suits...but I don't think our musky friends will."

"Then we shall have to go alone."

"Yeeeahhh, about that. We aren't strong enough to dig that deep... which is why we brought them."

"We have our weapons, they will have to do."

"The surface is unstable enough."

"This may be our only chance to save Pioneer Station and Asteroid Base: Alpha. If you do not wish to accompany me.."

"No..no fine.. I'll go with you...to hold your hand."

"Riley..."

"Ahem.."

"Sorry... 'Paul'"

"Better... now.. raise shields and take us down!"

"I don't take orders from you... you do realise that."

"Yeah."

"..Well....nevermind."

Sh'ral plotted a course to the coordinates Ensign Swan specified, while Riley went to suit up and inform their passengers that they had a wasted trip.

....

By the time Ruby reached her quarters, Jasmine was gone. All that was left was a note explaining that she had booked passage on a shuttle to leave the Sector. Checking the time of the shuttle and the current time, she realised that it was about to leave. Casey caught up with her but was soon forced to run again as she sped off to the shuttlebay.

Casey took the lead and used his authority to clear the corridors as they ran. But when they reached the shuttlebay, the shuttle was in the main hanger, stationary on the ground. The hatch was open and Jasmine was on the ramp with O'Neill and several other officers. Except this shuttle wasn't a passenger flight, it was a security transport.

Chloe was also walking away from the shuttle after being in hushed conversation with Jasmine. When she saw Ruby, she picked up the pace to reach her and Casey.

"What's going to happen to her...?" Ruby asked, trying to hold back more tears seeing her best friend and 'occasional' partner being bound up.

Chloe put her arm around her and told her that 'no matter what happens to her, she's still a freedom fighter for many people.' Ruby smiled reassured and nodded in agreement. But when Jasmine started to be taken into the shuttle she broke down and ran towards it. Casey was going to call her back but Chloe stopped him.

David also tried to intercept her but stopped himself on seeing her up close and began to head to Chloe and Casey while calling back to the guards.

"Let her go for a few minutes, guys!" The escorting officers let Jasmine go and stood at the top of the shuttle ramp, letting Jasmine and Ruby meet at the bottom.

Although she could not return the affection, Ruby quickly embraced Jasmine, not saying a word.

"It's not your fault.." Jasmine whispered in her ear, "Don't forget that..."

"They can't do this... he attacked *you*."

"But we covered it up...and tried to run."

“But..”

“Don’t be too hard on Commander O’Neill... he wouldn’t have been able to cover his findings up for long... and he got you off the hook.”

“You can’t go... you just got here.”

“It’s not like I have a choice.”

Ruby ran her right hand through Jasmine’s hair and tensed up, realising the guards were coming back down to get her.

“Say it, before you go... please.”

“Say what?” She asked, now being slowly guided backwards into the shuttle.

“Something I’ve been waiting for you to say for years..!”

“Ruby I...”

“Quickly..Please..!”

“I Love You, Ruby Pallet”

No sooner than the words were out of her mouth, Ruby skipped up the ramp, took Jasmine’s head with both hands and kissed her. She held it for as long as she could before being pulled off her.

On the other side of the bay, Chloe was also trying to control herself. Casey and David were at either side of her, equally downhearted at what was unfolding in front of them. Chloe took a few deep breathes.

“Some might call that unprofessionalism...but I call it being Human.” She paused, hearing Casey swallow hard on her right and David sniff to her left – feeling guilty about reporting it to Starfleet before Chloe, who continued,

“I don’t want this Station to be associated with murder and corruption, I want it to be a place where people can come and be themselves. I want it to be a place where people can come and it can change their lives for the better. Human and alien alike.”

“But this..” she watched as Jasmine vanished behind the closing ramp, “this is not how it was supposed to be. Military conspiracies..Hirogen hunting parties...broken relationships..murder..traitors....I can’t see why anyone would want to come here anymore. I’m not surprised the Xai left. They have standards... morals...what do we have in comparison?”

Casey and David looked at each other as Chloe backtracked out of the Shuttlebay and towards the turbolift. The Hirogen had given permission for the shuttle to leave the Asteroid Field untouched. With confirmation of this, the forcefields around the doors activated and the main doors opened. Ruby walked away from the shuttle and watched as it flew out of the station.

She would have liked to have nothing more than to have some time alone. But this day was far from over, for any of them. The shuttle vanished from sight and had gone to warp, but

suddenly a large white light engulfed the station. Ruby fell to the floor and covered her eyes while David and Casey did the same by the doors.

Although they couldn't see it, they could feel consoles and lights sparking around them, some unfortunate enough to land on their bodies. Casey winced as he was struck from behind by a shower of sparks. David tried to get his bearings with his hands and pushed Casey out of the bay.

When the doors closed they opened their eyes. Just looking at the state of a single corridor, they could tell something was extremely wrong.

....

Chloe rushed through the doors to Ops to find everyone stumbling back to their feet. She had been protected by whatever the beam of light was thanks to the turbolift, but many others were not so lucky.

"Michael, what happened?" She asked the tactical officer who was waving his hands in front of his face.

"Sorry Ma'am," he replied, "But I don't have a clue."

"Did the Hirogen generate that light?"

"It wasn't light, Administrator, it was a weapon."

"A weapon?!"

"Armour strength has decreased by 69 percent. Shields have failed. Weapons systems on the verge of overload."

"Where did it come from, Lieutenant?"

She looked over his readings and then realised he hadn't replied.

"Lieutenant? Where did the weapon come from?"

He was looking at the viewscreen, so was everyone else. She turned and saw it, a large black object with what looked like moving tentacles heading towards Pioneer Station. It had already engulfed the Hirogen ship, which was turning away as quickly as it could.

"Oh...my...God.." Chloe ordered everyone to focus and return to their duties instead of glaring out at it. "Commander O'Neill to Operations! Secure all stations and stand by for instructions."

"I know what it is," came a voice from behind. It was O'Neill, he had gotten to Ops before she could call, "I've seen it...in the Trizor database.....it's defiantly a Trizor battleship."

"Trizor Battleship?! But..but what about the planet ship.. I thought that was..."

"No.." David shook his head slowly, "That was only a Science Vessel...no..**now...now** we're in trouble."

....

3

When Riley materialised on Accobar Three, he immediately found it hard to breathe, even from within his hazard suit. Sh'ral appeared by his side and took position behind him.

"What are you doing?" Riley asked, his breath fading in and out on the visor.

"Allowing your suit to compensate for this atmosphere, our scans can't have been perfect through this. Here, do mine."

By 'this' he meant the translucent green sky, filled with blobs of dull, yellow gases, drifting above their heads. This planet was once rich with jungles and large sprawling oceans. But those jungles had been vaporised and the oceans boiled away. Now it was not much more than a wasteland of holes and radiation pools.

"This reminds me of a holodeck program we used to run on the Phelos colony."

"What was it?" Sh'ral asked, while he was being tugged around slightly by Riley's forceful adjustments.

"It involved us wandering the Earth after Humanity almost wiped itself out after...well... shall we say Doomsday."

"A post-apocalyptic simulation?"

"Uh-huh."

"Interesting, I'll never understand the Human desire to visualise death and destruction."

"I'll never understand the Andorian drive to be extremely dull. You guys used to be fun and got involved more."

"Fun?"

"Yeah...fun."

"You must have the wrong species. Done? Good. The crystal nexus should be round here somewhere."

Riley closed the interface lid on the back of Sh'ral's suit and they both began taking steady steps towards a small mound in the centre of a set of ruins. As they got closer, Riley began to stop and start. Sh'ral ignored it for a while but asked him what the problem was when he stopped moving entirely.

"Don't you feel that?" Riley asked, now just moving his head around.

"No... feel what...?"

"A tremor... I'm sure of it."

"Mr. Riley... I can't feel anything."

"What? Don't those antennae of yours pick these things up?"

"Not really.... I resent that."

"Shhh, I hear something." He replied in hushed tones. Both stood and listened. Riley was right, there was something, getting closer and closer.

Sh'ral began to realise what it was. A now extremely audible rumbling and he began to feel it. The Andorian looked sharply to the small cliff face Riley was standing under, just before the clearing where the ruins stood. The top layer of debris and compacted dirt began to slide.

Sh'ral acted fast, moving towards Riley, grabbing his suit and pulling him back into the clearing. Riley whimpered as part of the landslide caught the back of his legs, causing him to fall to the ground. When he landed with a thump, he screamed in agony. Sh'ral looked back and rushed to him.

"What happened?!"

"Leg, leg, LEG!"

Sh'ral looked back, the suit had been pierced on both of his legs and blood was clearly visible from deep looking gashes. He shuddered on the spot slightly and looked around him, checking for any more hazards.

"Sh'ral...little help here?!"

"Alright...alright...hold on..." Sh'ral insisted, tapping his badge, "Lieutenant Commander Sh'ral to Kingswood, respond." After a few moments, a gruff Klingon voice replied,

"Proceed."

"Transport Mr. Riley back aboard to the med lab, if any of you have medical training...unlikely... now would be the time to use it." There were a few moments of silence, "Very well."

Riley's face turned to shock,

"No no no no, Sh'ral! You are not sending me alone to be worked on by Kling-."

His protests were in vain as he was dematerialised and transported up to the ship. Sh'ral sighed and began stepping towards the mound much more carefully than before. For all he knew, it was their presence which caused the earthquake and landslide somehow.

When he was in range, tiny pieces of crystal reflected the dull light, embedded into the dirt. Sh'ral thought that it may have been too late to save the one he was looking for, but pulled out his phaser and set it to minimum nonetheless. He targeted what looked like a thick area of dirt and rocky covering, and fired.

The mushy covering sprayed and splattered all over the ruins of what started to look more and more like a layout of a building. After a three second count, the beam was disengaged and Sh'ral once more carefully tread to the hole he had created. Inside of it...it was magnificent.

A perfect spherical shell of sparking translucent diamond, flicking the light in shades of blue and even faint pink in some areas. In the centre of the shell, a crystal identical to that shown to them by Roxanne was intact and well preserved. He carefully took it out, telling himself not to go and activate it.

“Sh’ral to Kingswood... I’ve found what we’re looking for... prepare for transport.”

....

Back on Pioneer Station, the situation was getting worse. The beam had fired for a second time, and the Trizor armour was on the verge of completely being ripped apart. Chloe was doing her best to keep things in hand but she was more a diplomat, not a tactical officer. Roxanne in Astrometrics had worked out that the large Trizor weapon had a 60 second recharge cycle. Very precious time in such a dangerous situation.

“David!” Chloe shouted after the second beam attack, dragging herself back onto the command chair, “Dim all external viewers!”

“Gladly!”

“To be honest.. I don’t know what to do... I’m leaving you in charge of fighting that thing, use your instincts and own prerogative!”

“Aye! If you don’t mind me asking.. what about you?”

“I’ll do what I do best... open a channel on all frequencies and translate into what we know to be the Trizor language base set!”

“Channel Open!”

Chloe glanced at the countdown on an embedded monitor on the right arm of her chair and focused herself into facing the Trizor once more.

“This is Administrator Chloe Harper, of the Federation Station Pioneer. We know you’re angry, we both did some damage to each other last we met. But this doesn’t need to happen again! The people responsible for deceiving you and making the original deal with you have lost their positions of that sort of power. We can resolve this peacefully, there is no need to destroy us!”

David confirmed that the message had been sent, but the Hirogen had other ideas. Their scout ship began firing blasts at the ‘tentacles’ on what had been named on the station as the Trizor ‘squid ship.’ As they did so, the ship also headed out of the Asteroid Field at full speed. As the countdown ended, Chloe watched as the squid ship turned, and the beam weapon fired. The Hirogen ship was entirely engulfed in the light. When the beam disengaged, there was nothing left but a few disintegrating bulkheads.

David announced that the Hirogen's had bought them more time, but also had other news.

"Chloe... I don't mean to alarm you... but I just got the last set of results back from Jones' computer using Sh'ral's decryption algorithm."

"So..?"

"The Self Destruct has been activated... and it's set to go in a few hours."

"Let me guess, Jones' override only?"

"Afraid so. Although Commander Sh'ral might be able to assist in that matter. But it's beyond me."

"Any sign of the shuttle yet?"

"Negative... and counting down from 50 seconds."

Chloe looked at the monitor which confirmed that the Trizor were moving into position to fire their weapon again. She tried one more time to reason with them, knowing that the next blast would cause the station to lose the Trizor armour which was keeping them from being obliterated.

"Look... I want to speak to whoever ordered this attack... face to face! I've got a pretty good idea who it was and I think that it would be beneficial if I were to..."

In a recognisable flash of orange light, Chloe vanished from her seat. The Ops crew turned to face the seat but David reminded them that she did actually ask for a face to face chat.

.....

Sh'ral placed the crystal in a reinforced case aboard the Kingswood and trusted its protection to one of the Klingon miners – who were getting quite tetchy doing nothing. As he took a seat at the helm, Riley limped in the cockpit, using small Klingon Bat'leths as crutches. He saw Sh'ral smirking, trying to stop himself from laughing.

"Don't... just don't... this actually hurts you know..."

"Yeah...yeah of course... erm...sorry."

Sh'ral took a deep breath to calm himself, not making eye contact with Riley, and plotted a course back to the Asteroid Field at full impulse.

....

Chloe was suspended in mid air, it was a strange feeling. One of helplessness and yet calming at the same time. She recognised the layout of the room through the dim lighting as that of a similar design, which was used to hold her on the Planet Ship. She had a strong

feeling as to who was leading the attack, and her thoughts were confirmed when a large Trizor military officer strode into the room.

"Hello, Bob." She announced, "Long time no see."

"You may continue to use your silly names for your own amusement if you please, Harper of Pioneer, as you will soon be dead, your station will be destroyed and your Asteroid Field, mine."

"Maybe. But you won't hurt anyone else. The rest of the Asteroid Field has been evacuated. Looks like you get what you're given....*Bob*. So... how goes the military coup."

"It has been a great victory! The science clad has all but been disbanded. All that remains are a few cut off scientists, still believing in diplomacy and flimsy instruments."

"...and yet, I always preferred Dave over you."

"Then you chose unwisely in your preference. Do you require liquid sustenance to quench a thirst?" He asked, lifting up a jug of thick, red liquid from a surgical table.

"Oh no... thank you... I think I've had my fair share of that this millennia."

"Very well..." When she declined his offer, he lifted the jug to his grey lips and poured what was obviously blood into his mouth. Her stomach did a flip and her throat contracted hard. She made a point to look away when he did that in future.

"Well thank you for the chat, Harper, say goodbye to your friends for me."

"You don't have to do this!"

"Far too late. Much... too late..!"

Chloe struggled to get free of her invisible bounds but the Trizor ship faded away around her and was replaced with the sight of her own Operations, hearing David call out.

"Chloe! How did it go?!" But instead of replying, Harper rushed back into one of the chairs on the elevated platform. When she looked to her side, she saw Robertson by her side.

"Commander...?"

"Administrator..."

"Popped in to say hi?"

"Not exactly but.....I'll explain later, Chloe!!"

He pointed at the viewscreen, which showed the beam weapon lighting up from within the squid ship once more.

Chloe screamed for the Ops crew to brace for impact as the Trizor beam tore into the hull, shredding their armour apart. The armoured hull plating was literally ripped off the station and pelted off into space. Deck after deck began to feel the effects of the destructive weapon now that the Trizor layer was gone. The recently installed phase cannons lining the

standard hull layer overloaded one after one, setting off chain reactions throughout the station.

O'Neill was a victim of this. He was thrown away from the tactical console as feedback from the destruction obliterated his Ops station. Sparks and debris flung him back into a corner, knocking two other crewmen off their feet.

"Medical team to Ops, stat!" Chloe barked over the comm channel, rushing over to check his pulse. She could hear Ensign Swan from Engineering call out that the Trizor weapon would be recharged in fifty seconds. Checking David's pulse, she couldn't find one at first, but was sure that she felt something before she moved on. The state of his body was not a pretty sight.

"Where the hell is that Andorian you sent to Accobar Three?!" Robertson shouted, watching the time decrease before the weapon would fire again. "David said that they were meant to be back hours ago!"

"I know that!" Chloe angrily replied, "We can't assume they will make it in time...Computer! Evacuation Order 1 dash 2!"

"Acknowledged." The computer responded, in the same underwhelming tone.

Casey and Ruby were on Deck Six, in their defensive positions with phaser rifles levelled on one of the small barriers they had constructed. They expected Trizor military to soon run riot on the station, but that is when they heard the computer announcement.

"Federation personnel, proceed to Shuttlebays One through Six and Airlocks Alpha, Delta and Theta for evacuation. Repeat, proceed to Shuttlebays One through Six and Airlocks Alpha, Delta and Theta for evacuation."

The message looped as Casey and Ruby glanced at each other. Casey nodded and they began packing up the gear they had only recently finished setting up for a few hours.

But in Operations, no-one was moving. Robertson got to his feet and joined Chloe at the centre console.

"We can't get off the station in time... the recharge on that weapon is too fast. We'll be picked off as we leave providing we don't get destroyed before a single ship can get off."

Chloe agreed with Commander Robertson but she was lost for ideas. The defence grid, in combination with Asteroid Base: Alpha and what's left of Pioneer's weapons systems should have been enough to do some damage to the Trizor ship. But Asteroid Base: Alpha's fate was in the hands of a missing ship that should have been back from Accobar Three, and the defence grid controls were locked out to all but Captain Munro and a deceased Commodore Jones.

“Thirty seconds!” Roxanne announced over the comms, “Wait... wait! We’ve got something!”

“What is it?!” Chloe shouted back in anxiety, seeing the origin of the beam weapon start to light up again.

“It’s a ship... it’s... yes! It’s the Kingswood.”

“Better late than never.” Robertson said, heading back to the Command chairs, “Or not...”

“What do you mean?” Chloe asked,

“The Trizor ship... it’s turning to face the Kingswood. Ten seconds to recharge.”

“Open a channel! Kingswood turn back; get out of the Asteroid Field! Riley, Sh’ral, do you copy?!”

“No response!” Robertson announced, stating the obvious, “They’re firing!”

“No!”

But whoever was piloting the Kingswood outmatched the Trizor. The beam weapon fired but the ship spun upwards and the beam only grazed the underbelly ever so slightly. Unfortunately it was enough to do a lot of damage to the engines. Aboard it, it’s pilot knew that they were going to have to crash into the station.

“Well thank you Mr. Riley... you did do a better job than flying than I did!”

“Really?”

“No!” Sh’ral snapped, getting up and flipping open a floor panel in front of the cockpit doorway, “There’s nothing I can do... you’re going to have to glide us in, Riley!”

“I can do that... I can do that... Pioneer Station! I don’t know if you can hear this but clear the main hanger and prepare damage control teams!”

Chloe tried to make out the transmission but only heard the muffled words, “damage control” and “hanger.” But the image of the Kingswood on an erratic course towards the external doors told her enough.

“Clear the Hanger Bay! Delay all departing shuttles immediately! Damage control and Medical teams standby on Deck 11! Open outer doors.”

“That’s more like it!” Riley exclaimed, upon seeing the large doors pull apart, allowing them access into the station, “I hope that crystal is secure, this is going to be rough, hold on!!”

He began laughing nervously as the ship began to set alight underneath due to excessive speed and blast damage.

"I can do this, I can do this!" He said to himself.

"You can do this, Paul!" Sh'ral shouted reassuringly,

"I know I can do this! Didn't you just hear me say I could do this?! Touchdown in approximately ten seconds!"

The bay was now clear and the Kingswood was visible approaching in on internal cameras on Deck 11.

"Here they come..." Robertson pointed out, watching on the Ops console, "Fast."

When the Kingswood did enter the station, the crash could be heard on every deck. The ship screeched along the centre of the hanger, tearing up the elevated landing strip as it spun across the deck. The teams waiting outside covered their ears as the noise became unbearable as the ship passed the doors.

When they were given the all clear, the doors opened and both teams ran in to see the full extent of the damage. Smoke was still billowing out from the Kingswood but the flames had put themselves out on the journey right across the hanger. It was fortunate that it was so long, or there would be nothing left.

Admittedly, everyone present was shocked but pleasantly surprised when Klingons, Humans and Andorian alike clambered out from one of the airlocks. Sh'ral hurried over to meet one of the security officers present and thrust the case into his hands.

"Get this to Astrometrics, now!"

.....

'Bob,' the now leader of the Trizor people, slammed his hand down on the podium he was standing behind on the command deck of the Squid Ship.

"What the hell was that?! How could you miss such a slow moving thing?" He blustered aggressively towards another Trizor officer who was manning the beam weapon.

"We did hit the ship but it... it mostly..missed it."

"Mostly missed it? Not good enough!"

Bob pulled out a disrupter weapon and fired one shot at the officer. He was vaporised on the spot and the last anyone saw of him was a mass of green vapour being pulled into the ventilation system.

“Charge the weapon again!” He ordered the replacement, “Destroy Pioneer Station, now! And find out where that damn clone got to again! She doesn’t leave this ship!”

....

Roxanne grinned when she saw the crystal revealed from the case, it was exactly how she remembered it, from another reality of course. Quickly and carefully, she picked it up on a special cloth and took it over to the circular console in the middle of Astrometrics. She placed the crystal inside the anti-grav field in the centre and began scanning. But there was a problem.

“Administrator Harper!” She called up to Ops, “The crystal must have been damaged in the crash... I’m trying to compensate for irregularities but I don’t think I can do it in 20 seconds!” “Try, Ensign, try!” Robertson ordered before Chloe could speak.

Chloe remained at the centre console when Riley entered Ops. When he saw Robertson at his post, he joined Chloe instead.

“So... I hear we all die in about fifteen seconds.”

“Even if Asteroid Base: Alpha can return I don’t see how that will help us in time...”

“Well... if you don’t mind me speaking freely...?”

“I’m no Starfleet Captain Paul...”

“Well... I just wanted to say... before we all die... that it’s been a real pleasure working for you. You’re kind, funny, know your limits... you offered me a place when no-one else would.”

“I don’t mean to rush you but...”

“You were like sister that I never had but now you’re more like a best friend... and I think that goes for a lot of other people on this station.”

“Yeah... a lot of people that I couldn’t save.”

Out of the corner of eye, she could see the beam weapon firing. Riley grabbed her hand on the console and squeezed it, closing his eyes. She did the same as the room began to light up vigorously. This was it, the end. In the distance she could have been sure that she heard Roxanne announce that the Trizor were firing, but it was all just a blur.

But something happened which she didn’t expect. The light that was shining through her eyelids vanished, but she was still alive. Suddenly there was an uproar of cheering around

her and the hand that was holding her was shaking up and down. When she opened her eyes and saw Riley's beaming face – something had finally gone right. On the viewscreen, was a large Asteroid blocking the view of the Trizor ship and had taken the full extent of the blast. It was Asteroid Base: Alpha. AB: Alpha was back and had flown between the Squid Ship and Pioneer Station in time.

Robertson had his own personal moment of glee behind them and announced that the Asteroid Field defence grid was being activated, and all weapons platforms were targeting the Trizor! A sensor platform view was put on screen, showing the battle clearly. The Trizor's 'tentacles' revealed themselves to be conventional weapons, which were spraying around the Asteroid Base, but their shields were holding.

But as the weapon platforms began firing, so did the Trizor beam weapon. Both AB: Alpha and Pioneer Station got off lucky as the beam shot right through an area of pure rock, barley impacting Pioneer Station and completely missing the Asteroid Base. The next 60 seconds was all Captain Munro and her crew needed to coordinate their attack with the defence grid. The tentacles began to break apart and drift away from the Trizor ship as secondary explosions were visible from most locations.

Suddenly a voice was heard on Pioneer Station,

"We may have been responsible for the deaths of two people, Harper of Pioneer, but you and your associates are responsible for the deaths of two races! Romulan and Trizor alike!"

It was "Bob" throwing a last second insult before the Squid Ship literally fell apart. Asteroid Base: Alpha increased their shields to maximum strength and maintained position in front of Pioneer to stop the blast from affecting them. But the celebrations around the station had already begun....

Epilogue - One Week Later

It had been a long time coming, but with the Accobar system finally getting the support it needed after the Hobus incident, the process of rebuilding Asteroid Field Operations... was complete. The mining stations had been fully repopulated and the rest of the stations had been reverted to the state they were in before Jones got his hands on them.

As for Pioneer Station, David underwent crucial surgery after the Trizor attack but made a full recovery after a few days. The now official Administrator Chloe Harper had requested

for the weapons systems to be removed, but kindly asked for the shields to be kept in place. She also retracted her One-Year deal with Starfleet. Well, for the most part. David O'Neill, John Casey, Ruby Pallet and Sh'ral were all given permanent positions on Pioneer Station.

Paul Riley was also offered a high status position on Asteroid Base: Beta, but respectfully declined. Jason Brent was sentenced to four years on the Lunar Penal Colony, while Jasmine Thomas received two on the witness testimony of Ensign Pallet and Commander O'Neill – claiming for self defence while taking into account the crimes of the deceased Commodore Max Jones.

Adria Thomas travelled to the Xai homeworld and after days of deliberation, convinced the Xai delegates to return to Pioneer Station to resume peaceful talks. In pride, she confirmed her decision to remain in the Asteroid Field as the Ambassador of Earth, while Chloe resumed her duties as the Accobar Delegate.

Roxanne Swan was confused as to why she was not returned to her own reality when the phase shift occurred. When put in contact with Amber Munro, she was told the Asteroid Base: Alpha in 'Reality Two' was not there, and all news reports indicated that it had been stolen by the Hirogen. The same Hirogen that had been foiled by the Trizor in this Reality. As a result of there already being a Roxanne Swan on AB: Alpha, she packed her bags and left Pioneer Station for secluded working life on Jupiter Station. But she didn't go alone; James Robertson also made the choice to go with her – feeling sympathetic about leaving her on her own. She didn't complain as this was her second chance of a life with this man... technically.

.....

Riley sat atop of the flattest and most stable looking rock he could find, looking out over the wreckage of San Francisco. This was the first time in sixteen years that he had loaded the Post-Apocalyptic scenario. The flaming wreck of Starfleet Academy lit the horizon up in the distance. It made him think how far Starfleet would actually be pushed one day, but it also made him thankful for not joining.

He also thought he was alone, but was surprised when long brown hair flicked across his right cheek. Chloe had sat down beside him, looking quite interested in the vista.

"I didn't think you'd enjoy this..." He stated.

"Before this whole thing started... I don't think I would have. But I think we need to be prepared... the Military can go to great lengths to get what they want. Even one as supposedly upstanding as Starfleet. We've seen how far it can get if it's not controlled already."

“Good Point...”

She looked at him, without him realising and then nudged him slightly.

“So... sister and best friend, huh?”

“Well... you know... end of your life kind of stuff..”

“Oh, so I’m not your best friend?” She exaggerated, laughing

“You gave me a life, Chloe... I was nobody until I came here.”

“Of course you were...”

“Don’t... you know as well as I do. Spending day after day on Omarg’s casino... wasting away everything I had. Why did you do it? Why did you pick me to be trained here?”

“I think the question is... if you were so happy with the life you had, which you told me you were at first, why did you accept my offer for that training course?”

“Because I fancied you, obviously.”

Chloe laughed and then smiled affectionately.

“Well I’m glad you did.” She spoke softly, “You manage to find the bright side in everything. Even when your life is at risk and you’re about to die... I hear it brings out the best in you.”

“Been speaking to Sh’ral I see... I suppose he also told you about my ‘superb’ flying skills.”

“Yeah he did.” She replied, being truthful and sincere, “He likes you Paul... he doesn’t like many people.”

A few seconds later and she could hear faint sobbing beside her. The next thing she knew, his head was resting on her arm. Although she had always tried to turn him away from the subject, it was true that before accepting the position she had offered to him, he wasn’t well liked by many, known in the sector as a lifeless gambler and stolen goods merchant.

“You don’t still think of me as that person, do you?” He asked, looking out at the depressing horizon.

“Of course not...” she replied, putting her arm around him, “I never did.”

....

David joined Casey in the Messhall. The officer was looking out at the spectacular view of the Asteroid Field, once more calm and settled as the sunlight lit up the space dust and highlighted the drifting rocks.

“Casey...”

“Commander O’Neill,” he acknowledged, indicating the three solid gold pips that David was now wearing,

“I’ve got a little offer to make...”

"Anything, sir."

"We need a new armoury supervisor..."

"Are you by any chance asking me, Commander?"

"Maybe I am."

"Wouldn't I need weapon specialist training for that, sir?"

"Which is why you've enrolled on a course..."

"I have?"

"Yes... yes you have."

"Well if that's the case, then yes... I accept."

"Good... now with me as second in command, and you overseeing the Armoury... all that's left is a new security team leader." O'Neill said, looking over in the direction of Ruby in the corner.

....

Adria watched with many others in the diplomatic hall as the next UFP President was announced. She realised that David, Chloe and Riley didn't really care anymore, but would have liked some company nonetheless, although Sh'ral was watching from afar.

"And that is why," the reporter continued, "The next President of the United Federation of Planets is Nanietta Bacco!"

Most of the room cheered and began clapping. Nanietta Bacco had been the favourite to win since G'rath was pulled off the list. Bacco started out as a Governor on Cestus III; she had worked all her life to get to where she is, whereas no-one knows where the lizardous G'rath came from. But they knew where he was going.

"Former President G'rath the Third was today exiled from Federation Space and was returned to his home planet of Segula Two to await trial from his own Government. Admiral Venn of Vulcan was tried and found guilty of conspiracy and a multitude of unlawful actions. The Vulcan Council has tested Venn for mental instability, and has since found the results to be positive.

In other news, Admirals Wright and Jenkins have been given a full reprieve from the Federation Council and are expected to return to duty as Accobar Asteroid Field Oversight and Starbase 234 CO, respectively."

Adria smiled upon learning of Wright and Jenkins' clearance. Although there was no mention of Robertson for aiding Jenkins, she didn't expect them to care much now that he was gone.

As she looked around the room, she realised why people wanted to be here again. People were happy, and mixing with each other, Humans and Aliens. The Xai were also present and celebrating with the Federation staff. On top of that, she made it possible for them to be here, a big achievement after what they saw of Starfleet the first time round.

She was proud to be a part of Pioneer Station again, and for the first time in a very long time, everything seemed... perfect.

~~2388, Starfleet has taken full control of Pioneer Station and is attempting to keep the residents quiet regarding a conspiracy involving a mysterious species known as the Trizor.~~

2388, A New Year.

Star Trek: **Asteroid Field** **Returns in the spring.....**

The year is 2388, the Federation News Network has reported that the Vulcan Science Academy knew about the threat of the Hobus Star all along. President Bacco orders a full investigation, but is it too late? The Klingon Empire refuses to aid the Romulans, putting strain on the Federation's relationship with the empire. On top of that, the Vulcan High Command has issued a most risky request – to continue their Red Matter research... on Pioneer Station.