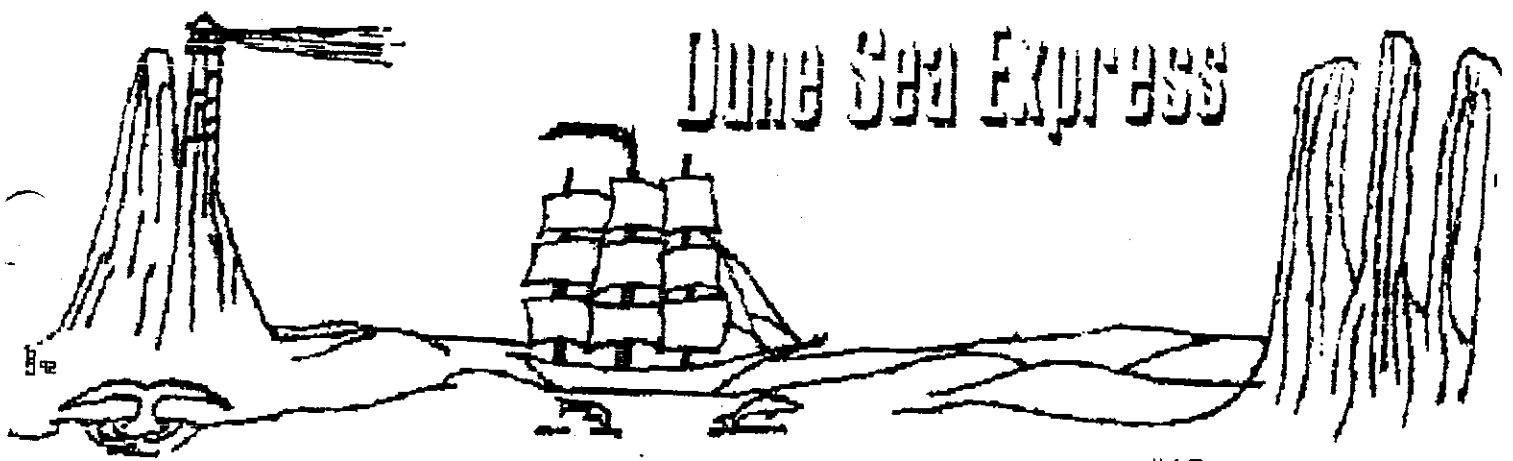
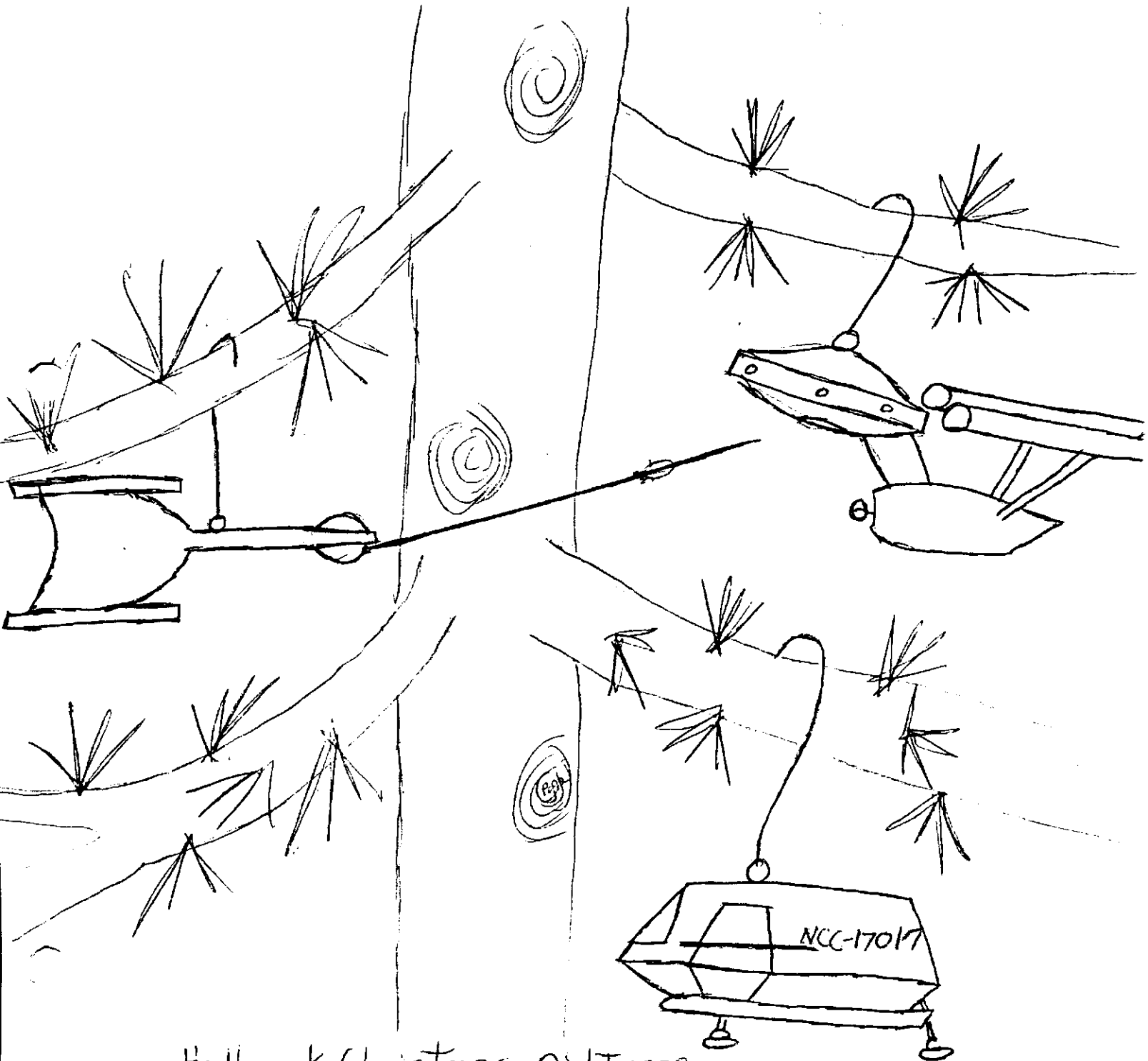


# DUNE SEA EXPRESS



#17 Winter 1992



Hallmark Christmas Nightmare

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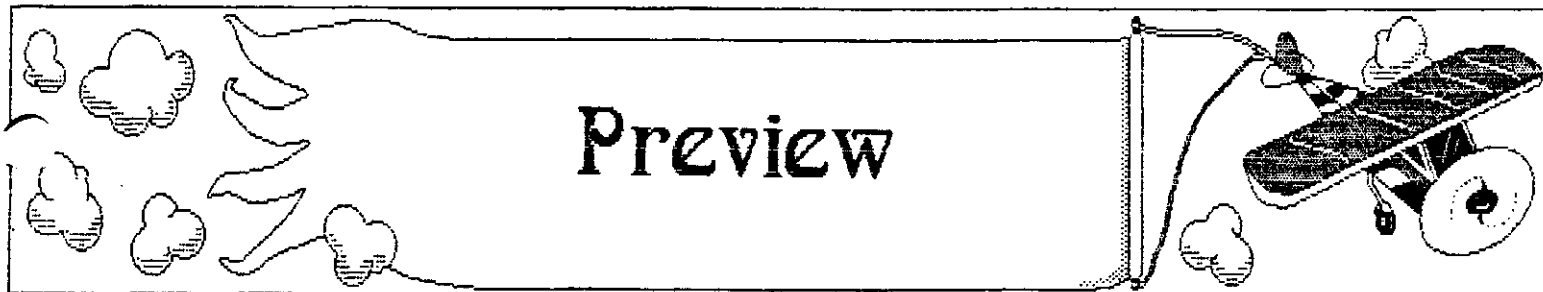
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# The Evolution Dilemma Part 2

By Ted Foster

*IN PART 1: After a riding lesson on the holodeck the Enterprise crewmembers become involved in helping save a Federation colony on the Cardassian border, Deralium II, from an asteroid which is on collision course with the colony. It was decided that the Enterprise would attempt to pull the asteroid off its course with the help of thruster modules attached to the asteroid's surface.*

## III

Riker entered the geoscience lab feeling a small lump in his throat. He had hoped to be able to bring brighter news, but his current estimates now showed that they would only be able to manufacture 46 thruster pods in time due to material availability. So far the odds had just kept getting worse.

Entering he saw Beverly Crusher, Deanna, and Lt. Hak'el standing over a computer work station. Hak'el's paws were moving very quickly over the workstation, but whatever the result was it didn't please her. "Fssshah! Exxxissating land transssportation iss insufficcicent. We cannot move sssso many from thiss disstrict without sstopping othersss."

"I take it your progress has been slow too?" Riker asked. Hak'el turned first and he noticed the characteristic fire in her eyes that meant annoyance.

"It isn't quite that bad yet", Dr. Crusher said, "But we are having difficulty trying to plan the evacuation with their current ground transportation. I hope they have gained some additional vehicles since the last census was taken there."

Hak'el's tail twitched side to side as she regarded the computer's results. "Our effortss have concentrated on sssending ass many possssible to the northern islandsss. With their many archipelagoss, water transssport is plentiful. It'sss getting the people to the coastsss that'sss the tail kinker."

Riker smiled at the Kiouan metaphor. He could hardly imagine any human having the gall or the bravery to kink this cat's tail.

"How about you and Data? Any luck?", Deanna asked.

"Pretty much as predicted so far." he answered. "The overall problem is that we'll have to use almost all of the ship's power at once, and we run the risk of burning out most of the warp field systems. That gives us only one chance to get this right."

"We have another concern as well", Counselor Troi added. "Our last audio transmission from the government reported widespread panic. What emergency measures that have been taken are being degraded by people not listening. That leads to the strong possibility of people being left behind in dangerous areas, additional injured, and other problems."

Will could see her concern, but he couldn't be sure if she had already tapped into the emotional state of the colonists. More than likely she felt a vague sense of their plight mixed with the tension on the ship. "Well, keep at it. I'm going to talk with the Captain, and I'll pass along your concerns. Hopefully this will all be for nothing." He smiled as reassuringly as he could muster and turned to leave.

Beverly watched him go and whispered, "I hope he's right." Turning back to the workstation, she became the seasoned professional again. "Let's try to refine our geologic models to see if there might be some safe zones on the southern continents as well."

The First Officer allowed himself to close his eyes for a moment as the turbolift moved swiftly up to the bridge. As common as the grazer phenomena was, it was a miracle that humans on old Earth had not been annihilated centuries earlier by one of these unwelcome visitors. Even when the technology to track and destroy small grazers had been developed, it had been another century before it was put into place. Too much was spent at the time for weapons and war.

Riker arrived on Deck 1 and crossed the bridge to the ready room. After getting a positive response to the door annunciator, he entered. Captain Picard was standing at the window near his desk looking over the aft portion of the ship at the stars. Riker shared a preference for this form of mediation with his superior. Both found the complexity and enormity of the galaxy at once humbling and thought provoking.

"Yes, Number One?", the Captain said turning around.

Riker began carefully in his tone of voice reserved for reporting to his superior officer. "I'm afraid our progress has been slow so far, sir, but at this time our first plan should have a chance to move the grazer. Data places that probability now at 48%, but there is a risk of substantial damage to our warp systems due to the high power output."

Picard had suspected this, but he had hoped for a better solution to be developed. "And Doctor Crusher's progress?"

Riker continued, "They are having difficulty coping with the planet's limited transportation facilities and the fact that panic seems widespread."

"The Nemesis has arrived." Picard said to the stars.

"Pardon, Sir?" Riker asked.

"Just remembering my Earth history," Picard said, "all though recorded time there have been men who proclaimed the end of the world was about to happen. For centuries people have used the writings of the Bible, Nostradamus, and even Shakespeare to give credence to their claims that they had at last determined the date and time when the end of the world would occur. Preaching to all who would listen, they would claim 'Prepare, for the end of the world is near. The Nemesis of man is upon us, and Lucifer's Hammer will soon strike.'"

Riker found his words disturbing. "Do you think that they may have been more correct than they know?" he asked.

Picard smiled thoughtfully, "I think that some of those people were genuinely concerned, but the majority seemed to be those who would use fear and panic for their gain. Proclaiming that the world would end unless their wishes or beliefs were adopted was a powerful if underhanded argument. I have much more respect for those who pushed for solving the world's problems; hunger, conflict, disease, and even eliminating the threat to Earth from natural disasters such as the one facing Deralium II." His lesson was interrupted by the door annunciator. "Come," he said, and Lt. Worf entered. He approached the desk and stood at ease to make his report. "Go ahead, Lieutenant," Picard prompted.

"We have located two other vessels which will be able to render assistance. The USS *Pegasus*, a Wasp class fighter carrier under TAC command, is three days away. Also in the sector is the Betazed passenger carrier *Solstice*. It will take her five days to disembark her current passengers and arrive here. Her capacity is 7,000 passengers."

Picard looked at Riker, "At last, some good news. That combination should work well. What the liner lacks in transporter availability the *Pegasus* can make up for with her many small shuttles. Who's commanding the *Pegasus*?"

Worf answered, "Captain Thomas Marschall." Both Riker and Picard looked at each other. "You know of this man?" Worf asked.

"The Falcon himself," Riker said. "In our last conflict with the Cardassians, Marschall became renowned for his piloting ability with fighter craft. In both atmospheric and spatial fighting, the Cardassians found him to be such a threat that they gave him the name, 'The Falcon.'"

"Indeed, it was he who later argued for Starfleet Tactical to keep and upgrade the fighter carriers as support ships. His policies vindicated their usefulness," Picard was interrupted again by Ensign Ro's soft alto voice on the intercom, "Bridge to Captain."

"Picard Here."

"Incoming message for you from Deralium II, sir. Coordinator Effingham wishes to speak with you."

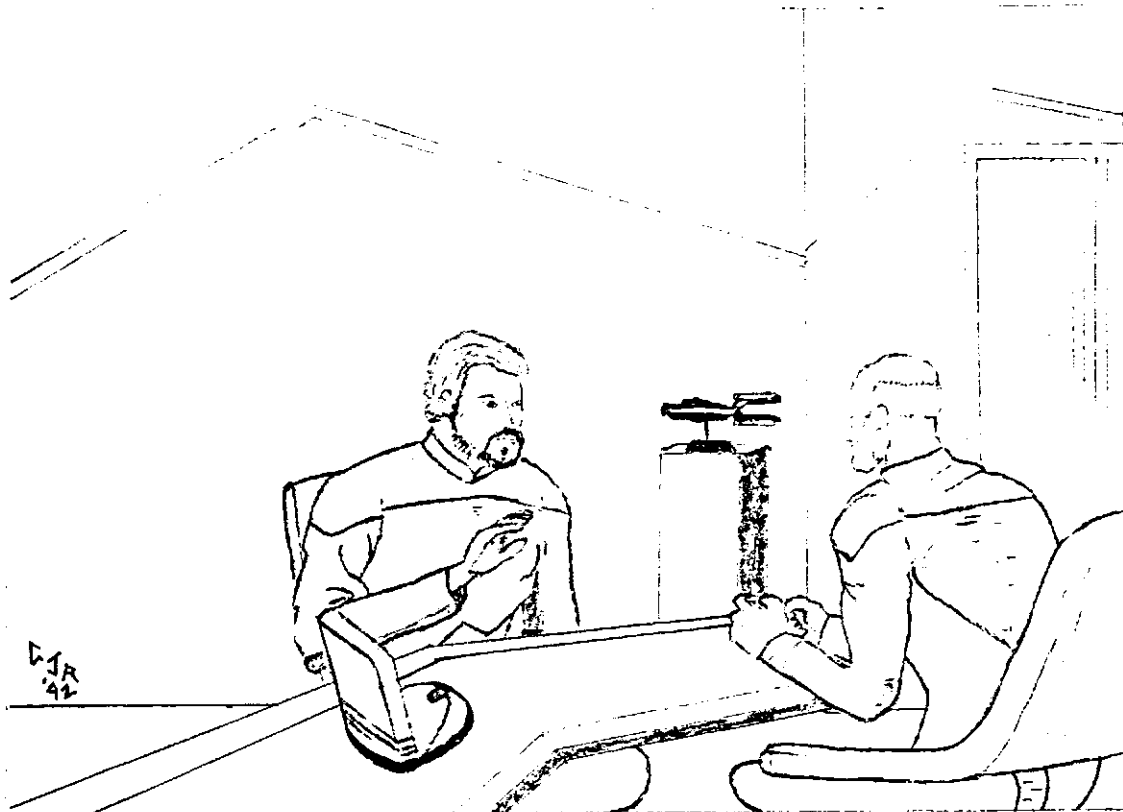
"Pipe it in here, please."

"Aye, sir."

Picard turned his display monitor to where it faced him at his desk. In a moment the image of the Coordinator appeared. Dressed in a light orange jumpsuit, Picard judged his age to be in the mid-fifties. Dark Brown eyes in his lean face betrayed a sense of despair in his manner that otherwise showed strength and leadership. Picard thought that the man could use some good news. "Greetings, Coordinator. I'm Captain Jean Luc Picard of the starship *Enterprise*. What can I do for you?" Picard tried to give an air of assurance to a man who at that moment needed it.

"Warm welcome, Captain," he said, "There are several matters about which I must speak with you. But first, may I ask how you are progressing with our problem?"

Picard thought a positive note might be best to start with. "We are working on several solutions at this time, Coordinator, in the hopes of preventing a collision. We have also located two other ships which are



moving to assist at this time should we need to begin an evacuation."

The Coordinator frowned and Picard could easily see the turmoil which was pent up inside the man. "I hope that doesn't come to pass, Captain. Unfortunately our efforts at preparing our population have been very slow. In our two main population centers, wide spread looting is occurring while in our many agricultural areas people have ignored our evacuation plans by refusing to leave their homes or by heading off into the countryside. And we have not even begun to address the problem of the uplift experiments."

Picard shot Riker a surprised glance as he had not heard of this before. "Pardon me, Coordinator. We know of your problems with your populace, but please explain to me what you mean by 'uplift experiments.'"

"Our life here has had several purposes, Captain. Part of that has been turning the barren, marginal areas of our agricultural zones into the fruitful land it is now. The second has been working with several indigenous life forms which are on the verge of breaking through to become sentient life."

"I gather from your term 'experiment' that you have been aiding them in this?" Picard asked. The cautionary light in his mind that warned him when something contradicted Starfleet's non-interference directive began to go off.

"Yes, we have. Our experiments have been done with the utmost care at the genetic level, Captain, and have been very slow in progression. I can see you are concerned with the impact this could have on the Federation and on the species themselves, but I assure you that all work is sanctioned by the highest levels of the Federation's Science Council."

"How did all this start, Coordinator?" Picard asked.

"We began with a creature known as the Kantaur, a one meter long sea animal similar in origin to Terran crustaceans. These creatures have developed a very complex and ordered society complete with a primitive sonar language, a system of leadership, and even complex social behaviors such as warfare and the communal raising of their young. They have already begun to use simple tools, and regularly exhibit behavior showing self-sacrifice. Uninhibited, they would have eventually made the next step to sentience within the next 5,000 to 50,000 years."

Picard was intrigued even though his internal warnings had only dimmed a little. "I take it that you were not able to...assist them...as you had planned?"

"That is correct. One of their drawbacks was the fact that most of the population stays underwater where our ability to study and handle them on a one to one basis was limited. Secondly, their growth does appear to be inhibited. In order to continue to grow, they must be able to freely access the surface of the land, and this they cannot do as they are preyed upon by several large land carnivores. Though they can exist equally well in both saline water and air, they will never be able to advance so long as their ecological niche among the land creatures is already filled. Therefore they remain below the seas - forever to be a species of aquarian hunter-gathers."

"But your research didn't stop there?" Picard asked. "You continued with something else."

The image on the monitor widened a bit as the Coordinator moved a control at his desk. Next to the man a new creature came into view. Sitting on its haunches on the table next to him, it had a long, streamlined face covered in black, white and grey striped fur. Golden eyes gleamed from widely separate points on either side of the head. Short canine-like teeth could be seen poking out of either side of its snout, and Picard could make out strong paws with claws at the end of elongated fingers. The creature turned toward the viewer, and amazingly seemed to bow toward it.

Obviously pleased by Picard's reaction, Effingham said, "This is Fast-tail, one of our Tanatin subjects." The creature bowed again and then made a series of quick chirping sounds. "Unlike the Kantaur, these creatures are land based and were readily available for us to work with. Though not having as developed a social structure, they have adapted quickly to our nudges up the evolutionary ladder."

Picard was amazed, and a quick look at his two officers told him that they felt the same. "How many of these beings are there, sir?"

Effingham's haggard features managed to show some pride. "We have 10 gamma stage adults, 300 beta stage, while the entire population of 200,000 has been raised to the primary alpha stage of development. That is our problem Captain. We are on the verge of contacting a new sentient species. They simply cannot be left behind should the planet be evacuated."

That thought set off a wild cacophony of chirps and whistles from the Tanatin. Remarkable, the Coordinator seemed to understand and responded with some low chirps of his own. The creature quieted but seemed on edge.

Picard forced away an incredulous look that momentarily appeared on his face. "Am I to understand, sir, that you are expecting all of these creatures to be evacuated in addition to your own population? At this time we are not completely certain that we can get the humans off your world if the need arises."

In that case, Captain, I hope for all our sakes that your efforts to prevent the collision are successful. Good day to you." With a quick gesture to his forehead and mouth, Effingham's transmission ceased.

Picard thought for a moment, then faced his waiting officers. "Comments?"

Riker seemed amazed, "There is no way that our three ships can take aboard so many beings. The wild Tanatin would take specialized handling and facilities."

"I agree, Sir," Lt. Worf added. "Considering our current problem it would risk too many lives to complete an undertaking like that, and it is unlikely that the Cardassians will volunteer to help."

Picard mused, "I would be inclined to assume that as well. All right, Commander, getting back to your present situation..."

The alarm klaxon sounded then, followed immediately by the computer's voice saying, "Yellow alert. All personnel should assume alert stations."

Ensign Ro came on then, "Captain to the Bridge, please."

The three men moved together through the ready room doors and onto the bridge's spacious confines. Worf moved up the ramp to tactical while Ro stood in front of the command chair.

"Status Lieutenant?" Picard asked.

"Sensors have detected an object bearing 280 mark 111 on a parallel course, sir. It is 220,000 km away and seemed to appear out of nowhere. Appearing so close could only be possible with a cloaking device."

Riker looked at Ro with an appraising glance, and could tell that being caught off guard had bothered her. Noticing his gaze however, her face quickly regained its composure with her usual sardonic half smile. Unfathomable as ever, he thought, though he knew that a deep part within himself keenly wanted to get past her facade. How to do that and keep his command working well, however, was almost as deep a mystery. His thoughts were brought back to the here and now by the Captain.

"Indeed? Romulans here?" Picard said.

Worf growled at that despite himself, but when the Captain turned he simply said, "Or the Cardassians have developed a cloak of their own." Ro moved without further comment to the ops chair.

"Can you match the configuration of the object with any known ship type, Ensign?" Picard asked.

Ro's hands moved over the panel quickly. She looked puzzled at first, then answered, "The vessel matches no known configuration, nor is it giving off any kind of transporter signal. Sensors are reading some very unusual energy patterns, but I can't seem to get a reading back on any of its composite materials."

The Captain took a moment to seat himself. "Try and hail them Mr. Worf."

"Aye, sir," the Klingon began, then suddenly added, "Sir, they're gone!"

"Recloaked?" Riker demanded.

"Unknown. There was no momentary fluctuation or shimmer as there is with known types."

Picard thought over his options for a moment. He had no time to waste on dealing with another ship, but having a Romulan Warbird possibly hanging over his shoulder did not please him either.

"Sir?" Ro asked.

"What is it, Ensign?" Picard replied. Ro began to answer then hesitated. The Captain added in a tone both reassuring and forceful, "What did you see, Ro?"

"For a moment before it vanished, sir, it appeared that the entire structure of the vessel changed. It was as if it went from one type of vessel to a brand new configuration in the blink of an eye."

Picard looked at his first officer, "Stranger and stranger, eh, Number One?" Turning back to Ro, he added, "Any chance of a sensor malfunction?"

"It's possible, sir, but highly unlikely. A level one diagnostic was performed only two days ago."

"Indeed?" Picard thought for a moment. "Unfortunately our mission can't be delayed. Continue on present course but maintain alert status. And keep monitoring the sector in case our mystery ship decides to appear again."

The many hours he had been awake began to catch up with him, and he took a moment to rest his eyes. Hearing the swoosh of the turbolift doors, Picard knew Commander Data had the rest of the third shift had arrived. "I think I'll turn in Number One. Some rest might be in order for you as well."

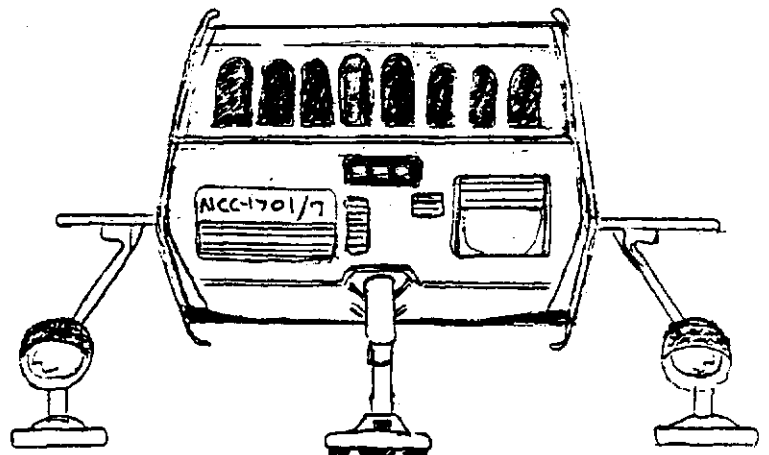
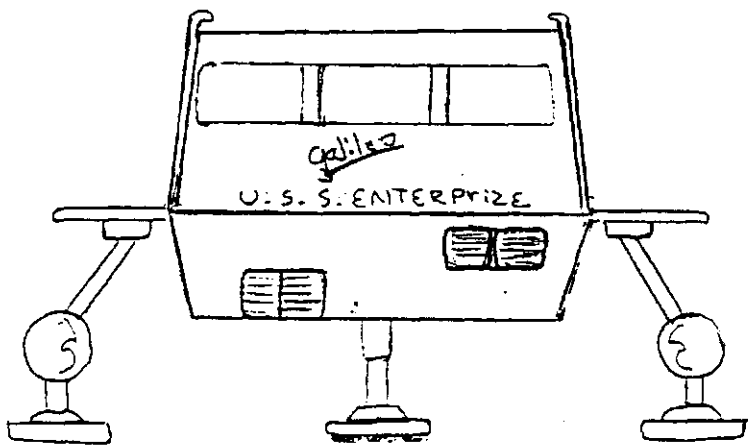
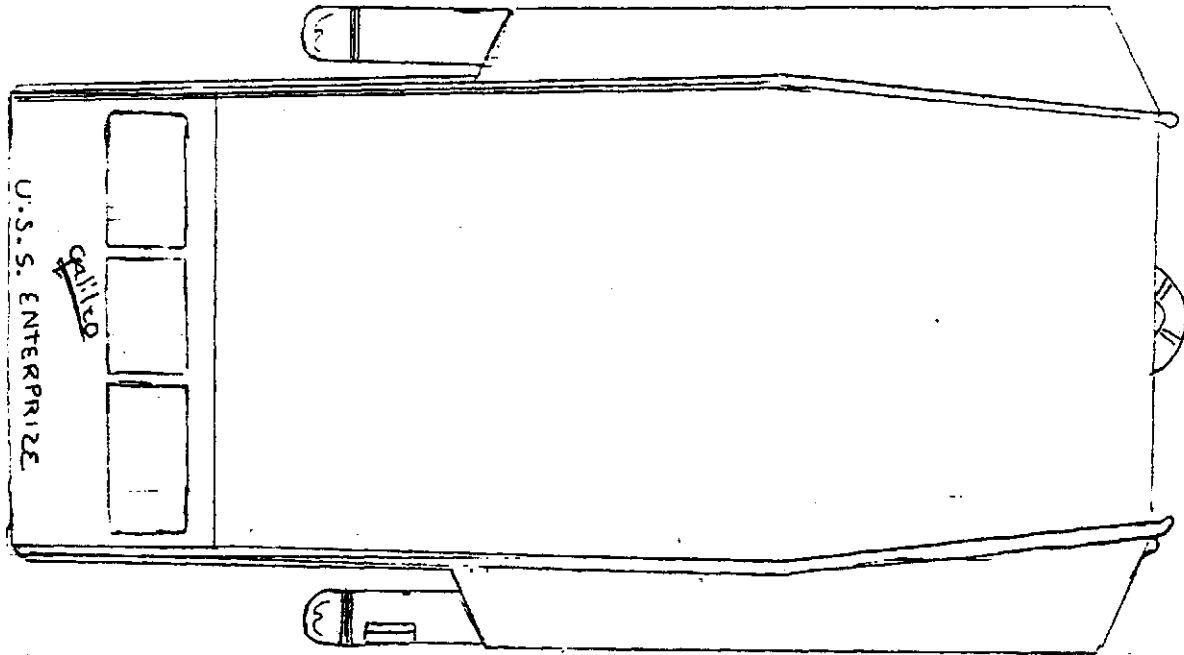
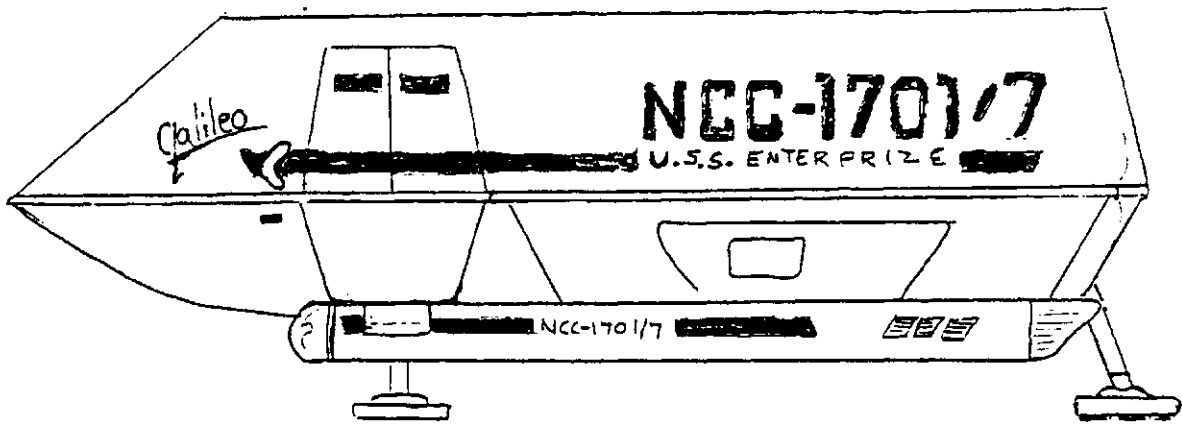
"Agreed, sir," Riker said. Technically both their shifts were now over as the Enterprise was on its 'nighttime' cycle. It was the only time that both officers had for themselves.

Rising with Riker to head to the lift, Picard said in a low voice to Riker, "Someone appears to be taking an interest in our efforts here, Number One. Since they seem to have a rather unique technology, all we can do is hope that they will be a help to our problem."

Story continues with part 3 later in this issue.







Shuttlecraft -- Constitution Class NCC-1701

Type: medium short-range sublight shuttle

Accommodations: two flight crew, five passengers

Power Plant: two impulse drive engines, either microfusion thrusters

Dimensions: Length 24 feet, Height 7 feet

Weight: 3 tons

Armament: none

Performance: .82 light speed

Print Designer: Gary Geick

# *Critique-al Mass*

By Mark Gillespie and Tony Steele

To set the scene: "Relics" just aired, Mark was complaining about it and Sandra (see book review column inside back cover) could no longer keep her big mouth shut. (They didn't tell me they were tape recording the conversation.)

SS: I liked it! I don't think this episode was geared to the typical Next Gen audience.

MG: I couldn't stand that episode!

TS: It was good!

MG: I'm sorry but, I don't like the way they destroyed Scotty's character...

SS: WHATT???

MG: PLEASE Scotty has become this doddering old fool who wanders around...

SS: He isn't a doddering old fool.

MG: He practically destroyed Engineering, going around touching everything. He wouldn't have let anybody do that on HIS ship! (Tony spent most of this discussion laughing hysterically on the floor.) Scotty would never go into somebody else's engine room and screw around.

SS: No, it's still an Enterprise. He wouldn't care what...

MG: That's not the point. He wouldn't go into another man's engineering and start messing with stuff he didn't know about. He admitted that the systems were new to him. Furthermore, Scotty wouldn't sit around telling stories like that. "Oh the Dolman of Troyius, she was a little minx, she whined and complained" (This is not a true quote. SS) There has never been any evidence in any of the movies that indicated that was what Scotty's character would be like.

TS: He also wasn't seventy years old in the movies either. He's been stuck in a transporter for seventy-five years.

SS: First of all, Doctor Crusher wanted him to get some rest because of all the stress anyway. Reliving the past was how the shock expressed itself.

TS: If he'd been smart, Scotty would have stayed in his room and read up on some technical journals anyway...

MG: Yeah, Scotty would have done that, it would be like "Wow! This is such a neat ship, I want to learn everything about it!" and gone over to the terminal and said "I want to access the technical journals on this Enterprise. That's what Scotty would have done."

SS: No, Scotty never did like a smart---computers. (remember what he did to the pregnant guppy also.) He couldn't STAND the M-5 computer and essentially that's what runs this Enterprise, an improved M-5. (I think these people need to rewatch "The Ultimate Computer" I'm not buying this M-5 line of thought at all. The M-5 was designed to eliminate humans from the process.- Pam)

TS: The M-5 has finally taken over!

SS: Given another approximate fifteen years of career onto when we theoretically saw him last, I think his behavior is perfectly appropriate.

MG: I got the impression that it took place very soon after STVI.

TS: Oh no, no. That's only because he was wearing the same jacket.

SS: Now come on, he was wearing a Next Gen insignia on this one.

MG: He was a hundred and forty-seven, minus seventy-five is sixty-nine (This is a future finance major talking.. Scary huh. SS)

Transcribed and commented herein by Sandra Steele.

SS: No, it's seventy-two. (How's that from someone suffering from discalcula?)  
NG: Oh, yeah, seventy-two. Sorry.  
SS: STVI takes place when Scotty is around sixty or even maybe fifty depending on how you want to go by it. You just think he's older because the actor himself has apparently aged so much in the last twenty years.  
NG: We do know that "Wrath of Khan" takes place fifteen years after the original mission, then...  
SS: Then STIII follows at about six months, and then we have STIV following that one by about three to six months. STV is clearly two or three years down the line from that (Can't be. STV started with the crew having to fix everything because it was put together shoddily. In STVI Kirk said "Let's see what she's got" and in STV Scotty said "We sure found out didn't we?" or words to that effect. Pam) with STVI following in another four or five years...  
TS: No, STVI is more like ten years after STV because they are all getting ready to retire.  
SS: Yes, Kirk has gone from being the youngest starship commander ever all the way until retirement.  
NG: That means Scotty's really old then, about sixty or seventy...  
SS: I don't believe so, not from what I've interpreted.  
NG: What about Scotty's line in STVI, "I've just bought a boat."? He's getting ready to retire and do all sorts of fun things. He wouldn't be sitting on a transport ship moping around. "I'm so old, I'm so useless."  
SS: No, he probably had such a good time when they were out cruisin' in STVI, he changed his mind and stayed around for a while longer. The administration finally forced him to retire.  
NG: But he was going to retire! He was looking forward to it.  
SS: They had all been lounging about the academy teaching or something when STVI started. Presumably, this was when he wrote the manual. I mean it wasn't his thing. He wanted to be tinkering with ships and stuff like that. Like he told Geordi, he liked trying to find crazy ways of doing things.  
NG: And then of course they set you up, I don't like being set up. With all the "I'm so useless. Oh Woe is me." stuff and then he turns around and saves the ship with his wacky, crazy ideas. I mean.  
SS: Well, is that a crime?  
NG: Well, despite the fact you can't beam someone up with the shields on.  
SS: I enjoyed this episode. I do see that as a small problem, but you could theoretically decide that they had beamed out. The new transporters work a lot faster than the old ones did.  
NG: That's true. I just can't deal with what they did to Scotty's character. I mean, He'd keep doing things, he'd teach at the academy...  
SS: He was tired of doing that, he just doesn't have the personality to settle down, he'd always be looking for new challenges...  
NG: Then what he'd do is probably go into the designing field.  
SS: No, he wouldn't, because most design jobs are not hands on, you just draw it. Scotty likes to do things himself and most designers never physically touch what they are working on.  
NG: He'd probably be an advisor or something.  
SS: Oh, come on, I know he said he was off to retire but here he is... on a ship he's not supposed to be on... probably trying to help out a buddy unofficially or something. Come on, Scotty going along for the ride? Get real, he just said that because that is what everyone would expect him to do. Although I would like to know why he was never listed as missing or anything.

A BRIEF PERIOD OF SILENCE.

NG: So why don't you like the first "Romana"?

DSE READER COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK WELCOME

# My First Real Star Trek Convention

By Douglas Wilson

About three months ago I had the pleasure of meeting Bjo Trimble at the S\*T\*A\*RFEST convention on September 19, 1992. At first I didn't know who she was because of the fact that I haven't seen a recent picture of her and that no one introduced me to her yet. Then some more friends walked up and someone else introduced them and I said to Pam is that Bjo? and she said yes. I thought that she was just another S\*T\*A\*R member. She is just like any other science fiction fan. She is a wonderful energetic and happy lady.

After meeting at the mall the day before the convention everyone went to run errands. When my friend and I got back everyone had already left to go eat dinner. The people that were at the mall said that everyone went to the Golden Corral to eat. When we made it to the Golden Corral about 15 minutes later, someone from S\*T\*A\*R was leaving a little upset. She said she was going to go get a cheeseburger somewhere and that everyone else went to the Blackeyed pea because the Golden Corral was too crowded. We then went to the Blackeyed pea to catch up with our friends. Well Bjo was there with her group and they said that our friends didn't want to wait 30 minutes for a meal because Pam had to go feed her godchild. So Johnny and I decided to stay and eat dinner with Bjo, Bjo's daughter Kat, Walter Irwin, and some of the other members from S\*T\*A\*R. Johnny and I looked at the menu and we did a double take with the prices. Bjo even offered to help us with the bill but we refused. Johnny and I expressed our frustrations with what had taken place already. Bjo then basically told us to not worry about it and sit down and have fun and eat !

We then started talking about the Concho River in San Angelo. Bjo said that she had heard about all of the pearls that have been found in it. Bjo said that her husband John and Kat would like to go pearl diving there someday. I informed her about the sewer treated Concho River in San Angelo. She said that she has heard about a place very far upstream where the pollution doesn't reach the river. After that we talked for awhile about San Angelo. She wanted to know more about San Angelo in general. I told her about Fort Concho and some of the history of outlying areas in the Tom Green county. I know a lot about the history of such things but I don't know where most of the places are so I told her to go to Pam for directions when she wants to do all of these things.

The next day was the convention. The convention was a lot of fun but I can't say much for the organization. Our two teams for Star Trek Family Feud got slaughtered but we did have fun. I also played Taboo Trek which was also a lot of fun. We mingled for awhile around the tables and exhausted our finances!

It then came time for the costume contest and we all went to change into our costumes. Most of us were so nervous that we were sweating so much that our makeup was melting and sliding off! One of my friends was dressed up as a Klingon and he and another one

of our friends did a skit for the costume contest and they won! I was dressed up in a movie uniform and I didn't even make it for the finals!

After that the convention went pretty normal and everyone worked hard and also had a great time. After everything was shutting down we took down all of the tables in one half of the mall. We then went to eat at the Lone Star Cafe. The food was great and we all talked for about an hour after we were done eating. We were exhausted after that and went straight home and straight to bed.

In the morning after trying to wake up for about 30 minutes we went to eat breakfast at Shoney's with everyone. After all of the money spending most of us were actually able to pay our own bill without having to borrow money from our friends (except me, thanks Pam!).

We left at about 2:30. I read a book on the way home that was due the next day for English, I fell asleep in the middle of the book and finished it that night at 2:30am. We were able to get home safely and I went straight to bed for another nap!

Overall it was a good convention and I think everyone had a good time, I know I enjoyed myself! I would like to thank S\*T\*A\*R for doing a good job with presenting this convention, I hope it will be just as good or even better next year! Thanks everyone for a great time (thank you Mark for allowing me a place to sleep at your apartment). See you next time, hopefully I'll have another article on another convention pretty soon. Bye for now!



*H*  
<I've got a headache  
this big...>

# The Evolution Dilemma Part 3

By Ted Foster

17

Picard moved quickly across the court trying to anticipate each bounce of the ball as he hit it from target to target along the gymnasium's wall. Slightly misjudging a corner bounce he tried swinging his racquet off balance only to see the ball miss the far target completely and head for an open space near the door. The door chose that moment to swish open and Riker began to walk in. Suddenly noticing the ball he leaped to the side and heard the ball thud against the corridor bulkhead behind him. Standing up and dusting himself off, he looked toward Picard with a bemused expression and said, "Next time, sir, I promise to remember to knock."

Picard smiled and said, "My apologies. With several hours left before our arrival, I needed to work off a bit of lethargy. I used to be fairly good at target racquetball."

Riker wondered to himself what that statement might mean. Academy intramural? Planetary champion? One of the things he enjoyed most about his commander was the fact that he continuously surprised him.

Picard looked at him, and asked, "Care for a game before you go back on duty?"

Riker grinned. "Actually, I would, though I'm afraid you would be playing a beginner. But it will have to wait as there is an incoming message from the Pegasus for you. I thought you might like to have it piped down here."

"Yes, right," Picard said, and he moved to a comm panel on the gym wall. "Computer, have the incoming message from the Pegasus displayed here, please."

The wall unit acknowledged his command with a tone and then the screen sparked to life. It displayed a ship's bridge which was much more cramped. Where the Galaxy class starships had abundant room, the Wasp class ship's bridge was filled with additional consoles for the purpose, Picard knew, of monitoring the many small craft that the ship carried. To the Captain's right was a large tactical display with a separate communications section.

Standing in front of the captain's chair itself was Captain Marschall. A young, blocky man with thick legs and powerful arms, he could not have been as tall as Picard. His form struck Riker as being completely opposite of the stereotypical small craft 'jocks' he had known from his academy days. Rather than the standard Starfleet uniform, he wore the tan, brown, and green vest, trousers, and boots which identified him as a Tynanese Ranger. His communicator pin, maroon undershirt, and collar rank left no doubt, though, as to his identity. He smiled, and with a lilting accent began, "Captain Picard, I assume. An honor to meet you."

Picard returned the smile. "And you as well, Captain. How is your status?"

"We should be able to rendezvous with you at Deralium a little early. Current ETA puts us there approximately 1800 hours tomorrow. May I invite you and your staff to dine with us aboard the Pegasus so that we might discuss the logistical nightmare ahead of us?"

"It would be our pleasure. May I also extend to you the hospitality of the Enterprise, and suggest in the meantime our mainframes continue contact so that our crews may continue working together?"

"Agreed, and thank you. I've been looking forward for some time to seeing a Galaxy class ship up close." His face then changed to a look of concern. "There is one other thing I must ask before you return to your game, however, Captain. Though we haven't been able to confirm it, we seemed to have detected some type of unusual phenomena nearby. It appeared as some type of object, though our instruments couldn't seem to decide if it was a solid or some type of energy disturbance. The curious thing was that it matched our course and speed at warp 7. It was only there for a moment, then gone. Since your ship has the more advanced sensor net, I must ask you if you have seen anything unusual?"

Riker and Picard shared a glance. Then Picard replied, "Yes, we picked up something like that yesterday, though we couldn't identify it either. It may have been some type of cloaked vessel or energy field, about all we have been able to ascertain is that it is most likely not a natural phenomena."

Marschall seemed to digest his words, then, remarked with a wry smile, "Interesting. We haven't received this much attention since the last Cardassian incursion. Thank you for your information, Captain. I'll contact you again once we reach the system. Clear skies."

Until then, Captain. Enterprise out," Picard finished. Turning to his first officer, he said, "If the Romulans or the Cardassians are involved, this could become an explosive situation quickly."

Riker thought on this, then his face brightened.

"You have a thought, Will?" The Captain asked.

"Just a possibility, sir. With your permission?" Riker said and headed out the door almost at a run.

The Enterprise dropped out of warp effortlessly on the edge of the Duralium system and moved forward at full impulse. Had any eyes been sharp enough they would have noticed it moved on a converging course with two other bodies. The first was close and moving on a near parallel course, and its dual nacelles and sleek metallic skin marked it clearly as man-made. The second was much larger, ominously dark, and was still five hours away on the far side of the star.

"Pegasus now within visual range," Worf announced,

Riker acknowledged him with a nod and, "on screen."

The front viewer shifted to a small point of light which then magnified to show the Pegasus closing on its larger cousin. The ship was smaller than the Enterprise being roughly two-thirds its total gross tonnage, but its smooth curving lines echoed the later architecture used on the Galaxy class ships. It had the familiar disk shaped main hull of Federation starships with a comparatively large secondary hull. Differing sharply was the dorsal between the hulls which was much broader and stouter than the Enterprise's. Its reinforced sides were studded with sensor nets, smaller tractor beam emplacements, and most importantly the launching bays. Like the old Ingram and Excelsior class space ships, craft recovery was made in the fore and aft sections of the upper secondary hull.

As the ship approached it started to turn matching the Enterprise's course and speed. Captain Picard entered the bridge from his ready room, and as the bridge crew watched, the Pegasus' shields began to glow with bands of green, blue, and gold coloring. It had been a long time since he had seen the old Starfleet tradition of projecting low powered phasers onto the ship's screens to show the home planets colors. A customary form of salute, it had faded away with time. Picard smiled. He liked traditions such as these, and was impressed that Captain Marschall did as well. With a nod and a quick instruction, Enterprise's shields began to glow in return with the blue and white colors of the Earth/Sol system. Gradually the Tynanese colors faded from the smaller ship, and the tone indicating an incoming hail began to sound on Worf's tactical board.

"Pegasus reports that they are ready to receive your party Captain," Worf announced.

Picard replied with a "Very good. Have all department heads meet in transporter room two in ten minutes for transport over to the Pegasus, and have Commander Data be ready with all available information on the situation."

Within minutes the party from Enterprise materialized on the platform of the Pegasus' transporter. With a welcoming expression, Picard stepped down and offered his hand to Captain Marschall. "Permission to come aboard, Captain?" he asked.

Marschall, who was now garbed in the full dress Ranger uniform with a Starfleet insignia, shook his hand warmly. "Granted, Captain. May I introduce my staff?"

He motioned at the other beings standing behind him. "This is Commander Evans, my Exec."

A tall man with the fair features of a Scandinavian stepped forward with a slight limp to shake Picard's hand.

"And R'x'plk'dln, my Science Officer." The Hamalki next in line looking for all the world like a spider spun from glass - bowed. Marschall continued down the line. "Lt. Commander Kai Davidson, Flight Operations chief; Lt. Commander T'Pyrl, Chief Medical Officer; Lt. Jacqueline Romaine, Security and Weapons Chief; and Lt. Jar Eck Don, Chief Engineer."

Each being greeted Picard, who introduced his officers in turn. He was impressed by the variety of species on this vessel as normally Starfleet's true warships had little in the way of accommodations for other life forms. Apparently that was beginning to change.

Marschall seemed impressed as well. When introduced to Riker, he smiled broadly. "I remember you well, Commander, from your days as commander of the Spectre Cadet Squadron. Though I graduated two years ahead of you, word of your abilities in the old Talon attack fighters became well known." A malicious twinkle appeared in his eyes. "A pity you chose to waste your talents on the fleet's flagship."

Riker returned the grin. The remarks brought back a flood of memories.

Completing the introductions, the group moved through the ship to the officer's mess and conference room. Like the Enterprise, it had broad windows of augmented transparent aluminum showing the aft portion of the ship. After a variety of dishes had been consumed (including some live Gagh Worf was pleased to see), Picard had Data present the facts at hand. He then turned to his hosts and asked, "With this in mind, what capabilities can you offer to help us avert a collision?"

Marschall frowned, "Not much directly I'm afraid. Our tractor beams were designed for small craft only, not for towing large objects. Our push would be almost insignificant. However, Rk'plk'dln has been working on using our warp field to help augment the Enterprise's in temporarily reducing the apparent mass of the asteroid." The Science Officer from Alpha Arietis IV extended a delicate leg to punch up a display on the table top. Her piping voice said, "We propose adding our warp field envelope to this area to augment Enterprise."

Data, impassive as always, disagreed. "a second warp field would lead to harmonics which could seriously disrupt or even damage our warp field generators and intercoolers. That possibility would not be viable."

The Hawalki went on, "We propose to adjust the warp power fluctuations within these frequency ranges. No specific frequency will be used for more than .5 seconds which should not allow the harmonics to develop."

Data and Geordi regarded her calculations, and a satisfied grin began to turn up the corners of the engineer's mouth. "Captain, that may be just the extra kick we need to make this work." Data nodded, "I agree. I calculate that the frequency changes to their field should allow the two ships to interact without disruption. Our chance of success for our original plan I now estimate at 82.4%."

Picard felt a wash of inner relief move through him. "Excellent. Data and LaForge, I want you to remain aboard to run additional simulations to make sure we've ironed the bugs out with Commander Rk'plk'dln." Picard tried not to mangle the name with moderate success. "With your permission, Captain, we need to be ready to make our attempt in four hours."

"Agreed. If there is nothing more?" Marschall looked around the room.

Riker spoke up, "Yes sir, one more thing. Lt. Worf and I have been coming up with a contingency plan should our luck be poor on the first attempt. Lieutenant?"

Worf turned to face the two Captains. "We propose to place matter/anti-matter explosives from our torpedoes at these points on the Reaper." He inserted a data cartridge into the console in front of him. An overlay of the asteroid appeared on the wall screen with two dozen points noted with flashing dots. Seeing Data ready to object, he continued, "The point is not to destroy the body. These explosives will need to be set off in succession using a Clarke progression. In order to keep from breaking the body apart, neutronium shielding 7.5 meters in diameter will need to be placed between the explosives and the asteroids surface." A schematic of a circular shield with a slightly conical shape appeared next.

Riker continued, "These shields should allow for most of the force of the explosions to be channeled into space as thrust. The points on the body shown are hardened, dense areas which should be able to take the resulting force. The trouble is we will need time to place each assembly at those positions."

Marschall looked at the information displayed, then regarded Riker. "Where do you propose to get that much neutronium, Commander?"

Riker answered, "We were concerned with that too, Captain, but found we had enough available if we disassemble the deck and bulkhead plating in the Enterprise's hazardous cargo areas of holds three through eight." At the mention of this Picard's face shifted quickly from surprise to concern, but Riker continued on quickly. "The ship was designed to be modular to ease future upgrades to the class. These sections of the ship are the easiest to remove, and by stripping these areas of the ship down to the structural frame and outer hulls, we should have enough. We will, however, need your worker pods to aid in the work and to place the charges."

Picard had a slightly pained look to his face. "Very inventive. But before you dissect my ship, what kind of a time frame are we looking at?"

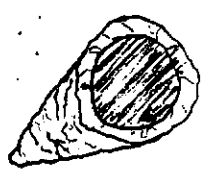
Lt. Worf checked his data pad, then answered, "If we are to be able to fabricate enough of these assemblies, work must begin immediately."

The two captains shared a look, then Picard said, "I was afraid you would say that. Very well, proceed, but if possible make sure that we can put some of our ship back together should our original plan work."

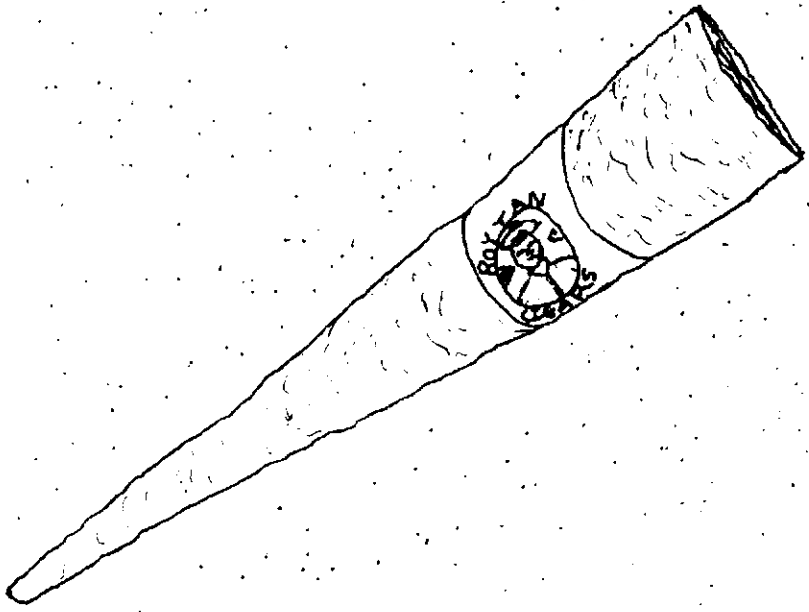
"In the meantime, our small craft are at your disposal," Marschall finished. "Kai, I want you to work with Commander Riker and Lieutenant Worf to coordinate the craft should the need arise. Anything else?" There were no more suggestions. "All right then, dismissed."

To be continued





WHO COULD HAVE  
CREATED SUCH A THING  
JIM?



WE MAY NEVER  
KNOW BONES. WE  
MAY NEVER KNOW



# Suggestions For the Spacefaring Insomniac

By Ted Foster

## "Imbalance"

Star Trek - The Next Generation Novel #22

by V.E. Mitchell

Pocket Books

Rating: 000 (Commander)

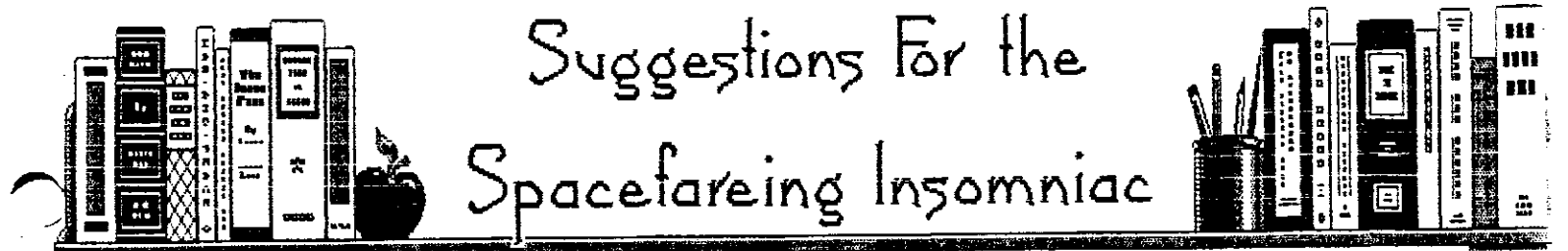
Like Last column's book (Weinstein's Perchance to Dream), this novel also falls somewhat into the formula category, but has just enough originality to it to make it a pleasing experience. Part of the fun comes from the fact that the race Captain Picard and crew must deal with are the Jarada, the insect race which many of you may recall from the episode "The Big Goodbye". Finding the folks at Paramount and Pocket Books willing to allow an author to build on a TV episode or movie always perks my interest, and V.E. Mitchell's treatment of them is very well done.

The author also scores well writing for the characters. Picard is especially well done. The book starts with the Enterprise on its way to Beltaxian Minor to meet with a Jaradan colony world which has suddenly and unexpectedly asked for a friendly meeting with the Federation and the Enterprise in particular. The first chapters are filled with a descriptive account of the crew as they visit this colony for the first time, and Mitchell has done a very good job in his description of the insect race and their culture. Things move along fine until the humans are separated, and one by one their chitinous hosts begin to go insane.

While some of our favorite people (namely O'Brien) are a bit more irrational than I am used to, it is a minor thing to complain about. The mystery of the Jaradan's behavior is intriguing though a bit slow in places. Why have they suddenly become friendly? Why do individuals unexpectedly then turn into killing berserkers? The ending is a bit too neat and quick, but at least answers these questions. Next Generation fans will find this one worth buying.

## Fans Please Note!!

The end of October Pocket went for our pocket books. The following books were released: Relics and Death Count in Paperback and Best Destiny by Diane Carey in hardback. The God Thing Roddenberry's original story for the Motion Picture which was due out anytime has been delayed and no new release date has been named. Harlan Ellison's original script for "The City on the Edge of Forever" was due out in November has been delayed till December according to the Comic Shop Preview. --Pam



# Suggestions For the Spacefaring Insomniac

A brief interview with Barbara Hambly

By Sandra Provence Steele

I didn't have time to read this quarter (Sandy has started graduate school - Pam) but I did the next best thing... I helped out with the Armadillo con and garnered myself a brief (five minute) interview with Barbara Hambly!!! (Ishmael, Ghostwalker) To my great chagrin, I have to confess that I missed another "Trek" author due to my stupidity. I will corner Melinda Snodgrass (Tears of the Singers) at another function. This was the second time that I have met Ms. Hambly, but she forgave me for my previous comments about Ghostwalker and spoke to me anyway.

Before we get down to the interview, and because it is my sworn duty to take up space in the DSE, I'd like to describe Ms. Hambly to those of you who haven't seen her. She is a petite pixie of a woman, with short mostly blond hair. She has a pleasant speaking voice, and always seems concerned about what her reader's impressions are of her writing. Enough drivel, on to the interview:

Q: What was your first published story and when was it published?

A: "Time of the Dark" in 1982.

Q: How many of your novels are currently in print?

A: 17 or 18, I think all of them are still in print except for the Beauty and the Beast novelizations Song of Orpheus, and the one from the pirate episode. (I really need to learn how to write legibly. I couldn't read the other title. Sorry S.S.)

Q: You've written two Star Trek novels, which did you have the most fun with? (DUMB QUESTION, oh well.)

A: Ishmael

Q: Do you consider yourself a Star Trek fan?

A: Not really, detachment from the subject is needed.

(comment: Ms. Hambly is the third writer that has said the same thing. I think that she is probably right.)

Q: Why do you attend conventions?

A: Public relations.

Q: You seem to write in several areas; science fiction, Gothic horror, fantasy, and now mystery. How long have you written and which is your favorite genre?

A: I have written all my life. I write best in fantasy but I like murder mysteries.

Q: I came in the middle of your reading, where is this story going to be published or has it already been published?

A: It's coming out in the premier issue of Pulphouse's new mystery and speculative fiction magazine. (Comment: I have a flyer on this magazine somewhere...Call or write me if you are interested, the story has a unique twist.) The story is called "The Banquet of Lucullus".

Q: What projects are you working on now?

A: I'm working on a Star Trek novel due out in November of 1993, and on a new fantasy novel due out in October 1993.

End of interview...Start of handsprings, cartwheels, etc..We are going to get a new Star Trek novel (OF COURSE IT'S CLASSIC TREK! Why else would I be excited?) and hopefully it will be wonderful.

