PART II

Recap of

The Voyages of the Penelope and the Yydryl

By: (In order of appearance) Masqua, Visible_Villian, Nenothtu, Whisper67, MF_Luder, SeekerofAUTMN, Antar, DJMessiah, Fooks, Whiterabbit85, Skyfloating, Studious, Cadbury, Scurvy, Silo13, JohnQ, Loam, Questioningall, Cindymars and Slayer69 Recap By: Studious

Note: This only covers connections between different posts and in no way does uncolorized mean unimportant.

(My apologies, since I’m running out of enough different colors Italicics have come into play.)

**Color Key:** (In order of appearance.)

Visible_Villians Suicide

Spit Shined Penelope

Conflict between Security and Marines

Orders are orders….or are they?

Khalamzadar

Repeated Regellian Phrases

Betelgeuse

About Regellians

Theresa Jackson

Asher

Where is the Doctor?

Carpet

Our Men Are Not Tools!

*Lead up to Mutiny and Mutiny itself.* (Italicized Version of Conflict between Security and Marines color.)

Mossian-Slea and Prophesy
**Fooks Murder** *(Italicized Version of Visible_Villians Suicide Color.)*

**Story Arcs:**

- Is Command Telling us Everything?
- Enhancer Project/ NI
- Antar’s Father vs. Dark Lord
- Continuity
- Comes Up Later

Personal Repeated (Small things that one person repeats.)
Nenothtu relaxed somewhat when he heard the Colonel's identification, and returned the salute. It felt weird, but defusing the situation apparently called for it. "Man, am I glad to see you. I'd appreciate a bit less manhandling from here on, though." He half grinned. "You might wrinkle my threads."

"I'd like to get just a couple things straight betwixt us, at the start, to avoid future... unpleasantness."

"First, I weren't 'sneaking'. That's just the way I move. It's grown on me over time..." and here he produced a twisted grin, that he hoped would pass for a smile "like a fungus. Or an old war injury." He didn't elaborate about how 'war injuries' can take many forms. This man, being military, probably ought to understand that, and he didn't want to offend him by explaining the obvious.

"Second, I AM formally dressed. This is 'bout as formal as it gets, for me. You can shine all you please, but I'll tell ya right now, yer damned lucky you didn't catch me 'sneaking' around in a loincloth."

"Third, please refrain from 'sir'-ing me. I got a job to do here, which means I work for a living. I ain't a 'sir' to nobody above the rank of gunny, to use a term your familiar with."

"Fourth, Intruders on this boat are my baliwick, not yours. Don't get me wrong, I DO appreciate your willingness to... umm... 'handle' the situation, but be sure of your target. In return, I'll not crash your combat parties off the boat. Fair 'nuff?"

"Fifth, and probably most important, DO NOT salute me. EVER. It's more than an inconvenience, it's a bad habit to get into, that gets officers killed. You get used to doing it here, ain't no telling where you might do it that puts a set of crosshairs on me. Just so I'm clear, and to emphasize the point, I will KILL a private for saluting me." Then Nenothtu slid into that unnerving grin again. "But you damn sure ain't a private, Colonel, and I reckon I'll let it slide - this time. We've got equivalent rank here, and I don't see any need for such formalities nohow"

"Now, if we're OK with one another, and I DO hope we are, I'd like to continue on my way to the mess hall, before my belt buckle slaps the hell out of my backbone."
Without waiting on a response, Nenothtu turned on his heel and continued on his way, leaving an air of uncertainty behind him. He liked it that way.

**Mf_Luder**

*Originally posted by Studious.*

A message from Admiral James Gordon:

To: Captain mf_luder

Studious is a fine officer but he has an insubordinate streak. Not that he’s a ruffian or a thug, but he just will not follow orders when he feels they conflict with his concept of honor. He just does not understand that orders must be followed. He’s the most disciplined man I have ever had the pleasure of commanding but he is a headache to give orders to. His men admire him, not because they’re friends with him, but for the compassion he shows them. It’s odd, he seems so simple to understand. So rigid, seemingly so predictable. But, in fact few people really know him.

Even his Personnel file is a little lacking in personal information and if you ask him about it he’ll probably tell you nothing. He even looks older than his record states. Already some say his hair is graying. Though it’s probably because of the weight of command. It weighs more heavily on him then the rest of us. His military record is exemplary. Every order, that he choose to follow, was completed meticulously but yet seemingly effortlessly. He has been passed over for promotion time and time again because of his insubordination. He is effective but my colleagues cannot see past his disobedient behavior.

Your probably wondering why I would even assign such a person to your command. After all he does not respect the chain of command, he’s an enigma and he’s not one you can easily have a drink with. Well, on a mission like this, a search mission, methodical tactics may just bring our people home.

Luder finished reading the report from Admiral Gordon and looked up at the screens. The swirl of wormhole travel was fascinating and alluring. Some said if you stared too long into the "swirl" you could lose hours without realizing it.

He closed the datapad and returned to the command chair. He had yet to personally meet all of the staff heads. Luder knew with certainty Security Chief Nenothtu was on board and this report as well as the docking protocols from earlier suggested this new Colonel was on board as well.

"Do we have a chief medical officer?" Luder asked.

The rosters showed DJMessiah on board, but Luder had seen neither hide nor hair of him since departure. Or the security chief for that matter. Luder pondered this and made a decision.
All department heads, I want a staff meeting in 12 hours. Please acknowledge upon receipt of this order.

There. At least his curiosity would be satiated. Luder felt it was of utmost importance to make a good and solid working relationship with those directly under a commander. These guys were the ones he would have to rely on if he was off-ship or otherwise indisposed and not able to command.

It was a bit unsettling to him the Federation decided to launch without a proper first officer, but he saw the necessity for it. The fact the Nimitz was missing for so long meant valuable time was slipping away every second the Penelope plundered through the wormhole toward Alpha Centauri.

Luder pondered the prospect of a confrontation with the Alpha Centaurians and what the results of a direct engagement would be. He had no doubts about the ship but this was an inexperienced crew... wait... no. He stopped that train of thought. No. They weren't inexperienced. He actually recognized some of the names on the crew roster from reports he'd seen in months past. The thing that made him uneasy was the fact that they were all thrown together in a mix like this. But, as it is expected, one of the major tenants of command is to mold and sustain a functional team; one who is able to trust each other with each other's lives and not think twice about it. Until this was achieved, he would feel uneasy.

Back to thinking about confrontation. Luder didn't like to actively seek fights. No. He didn't want to get into a confrontation. Plus, if it came down to it, the initial fight would definitely escalate into a full-blown war between the Alpha Centaurians and Earth. If that were to come to pass, he knew a lot of people in the colonies near there who would lose family and friends to a conflict with the Cents. At any rate, with two battalions of marines and a wing of starfighters, Luder wasn't really concerned with anything the Cents could throw at the Penelope.

Luder thought back to his days at the academy.....

In 2200, after Earth successfully achieved FTL drives, the first logical steps were in the direction of Proxima Centauri, Barnard's Star and Alpha Centauri. It was discovered upon actually reaching those locations that, yes, we were "not alone." The triangular UFO sightings so popular to culture back in the 1900s was in fact Alpha Centaurian scout vessels conducting research and surveys on Earth. The Alpha Centaurians were more than happy to start a partnership with Earth and aid in the development of technology (science, medical, engines, power, agriculture). It was as if Earth hit a scientific gold mine. For nearly 50 years this relationship was a strong bonding point between the two cultures, the Earth people providing a work force in colonial establishments near Alpha Centauri, and the Cents providing Earth with new technology upgrades and scientific advancements.

As anything else goes in the course of history things changed. Earth began to improve on what the Cents provided and began to outdo their "benefactors" in areas of technological development. As this started to affect the trade between Earth and AC, it began to put a strain on
relations between the two cultures. The Cents were beginning to realize the Earth people were no longer needy of their help and no longer had to depend upon them for aid.

Once this balance of power shifted, things started to slowly break down. Earth was becoming less and less willing to share their new found technology with the people of Alpha Centauri and was instead funneling it toward the development of military grade technology and new ship designs. The colonists out near Alpha Centauri, while still legitimately just working class citizens were looked upon with disdain by the Cents as accusations arose Earth was using their workers to get spies close to the Cents and their production lines. It was never truly proven if this was the case, but it caused enough of a stir in the Cents' government that they decided to start enacting tough embargos on the colonists and tougher sanctions on the trade routes used between the Cents and Earth.

Which brought Luder to his current state of mind. The Cents could possibly have Theresa in some type of detention. Or worse.

He clinched one fist and took a slow, deep breath.

It was one thing to have a dispute over technology and trade, but the minute you crossed into the realm of messing with folks and their lives, the situation called for drastic measures. Regardless of the myriad of possibilities that would eventually clutter Luder's mind, he knew he still really didn't know anything about what happened out there with the Nimitz.

The first logical step would be to send a data packet ahead to the Cents to see if there was a response on any type of frequency. Luder rose from the command station and walked to the empty communications station.

"Alpha Centauri High Command, this is Captain mf_luder of the Earth ship Penelope. Please respond on this frequency."

The computer packaged the message into a neat little packet and shot it out far ahead of the Penelope, out to the vast unknown that awaited them in the swirl.

**Fooks**

Originally posted by mf_luder

Whenever you are ready, fooks. Take us out.

My name is Joey Hun Lo Fook, people call me Fooks.
I am a pilot, my ID says,

Senior Celestial Navigator
Nice ride.

I used to jockey Starfighters, before I broke the age limit. They give you a cushy day job after 40 and some people love it or retire to the private sector, flying cargo or cruise ships for the big bucks.

Me? I’m a lifer, so I taught for CenCom awhile, teaching Long Jumpers how not to end up on an event horizon or worse. IntraDimensional Guidance Theory, 4D Combat Strategy Theory, you know, the fun stuff.

Tried to settle down but didn’t work out. My dog died the same day the divorce was final. Tore me up. Sooooo...I had kept my flight status up all along and asked for an active duty transfer.

Rear Admiral Johnathan “Hellacious” Hollingsworth III, owed me.

“Aye, Sir!”

“Mr. Whiterabbit, take us out of the solar plane full ahead and bee line it to Alpha Centauri.”

Nenothtu

Security Chief Nenothtu sat in the mess hall, contemplating a plastic trencher heaped up with "stuff". He wasn't entirely sure what it was, but by all appearances it was some sort of pseudo-soybean hydrogenated protein meat food product. Synthetic meat. He poked at it a couple of times with his eating utensil. Satisfying himself that it wouldn't try to crawl off of his plate before he could consume it (in his experience, one could never be too sure), he fell to it. To a casual observer, it was reminiscent of a shark attack on the high seas of Earth.

If the observer were less casual, and more intent, they would notice that Neno sat at a corner table, back into the corner. From such a vantage point, he could observe the entire room, and avoid the unpleasant sensation produced when someone, or something, got under his personal radar, and behind him. They would also notice that never a bite was eaten without a concurrent scan of the room. Those who didn't consciously notice that gained an uneasy feeling that he was up to no good, interpreting the room scans as 'furtive', when they were in all actuality more of a 'defensive' nature.

He glanced at the heap of 'food' on the plate, while devouring yet another mouthful. Still no movement. That's a GOOD thing, he mused. He'd yet to come to terms with things technological (as in his insistence on printing out hardcopy of memos - most folks just stored them in their...
datapads), and this 'food' most certainly fell into that category. Wasn't about to let that stop him from eating it, though. 'Eating' was a generous term for what he did to his food. More in the nature of a commando raid with a knife and fork.

Directly after gaining yet another mouthful, his communicator chirped and produced Captain Luder's voice. Neno twitched in surprise. More technology.

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Originally posted by mf_luder

All department heads, I want a staff meeting in 12 hours. Please acknowledge upon receipt of this order.

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He swallowed what was in his mouth without finishing chewing it. An observer would have actually seen the lump descend his throat, and probably thought of it as lizard-like.

"Aye aye, cap'n. Staff meeting, 12 hours, acknowledged. Security Chief Nenothtu out."

Nenothtu fell back to the business of 'eating'.

John Q

The chief engineer looked through the window in his cabin as the USS. Penelope slowly moved away from LagrangeOne. He placed his hand on the ship’s wall to feel the vibrations from the engines.

“The left particle resonator is out by 10 microns” he muttered to himself and then gave a smug smile to reinforce his comment. He was confident, but he was never arrogant. His friends at the academy would vouch for that. His outlook on life was that of someone at total peace with himself, complete calm. Even during times of stress at the academy, or the intense training programmes or even during the away mission on Targon 4, not once did he lose control, not like the others... definitely not like the others.

This was noted in his transfer documents issued by Admiral Stevenson for Captain Luder.

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It is with my recommendation that Chief Engineer John Q should be given his first commission to serve aboard the USS Penelope. Due to the fact he has studied an extra two years at the academy to achieve his Chief Engineer status, there is no one I would recommend more than him, nor is there anyone who understands wormhole technology better than him. He also has the ability to stay calm in the most intense situations even when pushed to his uttermost limits.
With that said, my only concern that I have is his lack of time spent in space or shall we say his lack of mission time. We all understand the pressure that comes with serving aboard a Federation ship and we all realise that this career is not suitable for everyone.

So Captain, if I may, would you please allow him some time whilst he adjusts to Federation life aboard a starship and offer any help should he need it.

May I also take this opportunity to wish you the best of luck with your mission. I have many friends and colleagues stationed on the Nimitz, we are all waiting for their safe return home.

Godspeed, Captain.

Admiral Stevenson.

John Q turned away from the window, adjusted his uniform and with a deep breath headed towards the cabin door. Walking out into the corridor he was met by numerous marines and security staff going about their business.

"God", he thought "are we going to war?"

Originally posted by mf_luder
All department heads, I want a staff meeting in 12 hours. Please acknowledge upon receipt of this order.

"Chief Engineer John Q, yes sir, understood sir."

He stepped into one of the X-Tower lifts.

"Computer, engine room"

With a sudden jolt, the lift dropped like a stone, faster and faster it sped downwards. It had rails to hold onto but they offered little comfort whilst this thing was in free fall. It was designed by the military ages ago and fitted into every Federation ship. As the ships became more advanced over the years the X-Tower lifts (or XTs as they are known) were never upgraded, if it works why change it. After a while the lift began to slow and eventually came to a stop. The doors opened. It was time to meet his staff.
It had been several hours since Seeker had integrated himself with the Penelope. In that time, he had run extensive checks on each and every individual weapon system on the vessel, up to and including a status check on the weapons in the marine contingent's armory.

When the captain gave the assembly order, Seeker was running loading checks on each of the 50 MagRail batteries on the ship's port side. A problem was becoming clearly evident from battery 47. The loading mechanism was failing to operate and the diagnostic indicated that a short circuit in the payload bay was to blame. Seeker fired off a message to John Q, the chief engineer, about repairing the problem.

A quick check through the bridge's multiple image recorders revealed that Captain Luder was still at the helm.

It was time to test another new function of the full integration system.

On the bridge, there was a shimmer of bluish colored light as the form projectors powered up. Within moments, a shimmering image of Seeker appeared before the Captain. It was clear that it was an image of Seeker, but instead of a cleanly shaven head and face, Seeker had well cropped dark hair and a neatly trimmed goatee. The image was also showing emotion, something Seeker had not done in years in human form. An easy smile played across his face as the image glanced around the cabin before sauntering up to stand before Captain Luder.

"Captain, the ship's networking systems are good condition. In better condition than I have ever seen a network, in fact. All weapon systems are still green as reported, except one. MagRail "47Portside" is malfunctioning. I've sent a request for repairs to John Q. I will keep you informed if you wish."

"Additionally, the projection system is evidently working smoothly. Requesting permission to remain interfaced with the Penelope unless the situation demands it. It is much easier to do my job from this vantage point. I will remain in projection throughout the officer assembly as well, unless you think it might be unnerving."

The following recording is a projected image message to crew member John Q.

"Chief Engineer John Q, pleased to make your acquaintance. I am Seeker, the chief weapons officer aboard the Penelope. I have been running diagnostic checks on the MagRail batteries and 47P is having a reloading issue. Would you have a member of your staff investigate the problem? I would appreciate it greatly.

"See you at the staff meeting."
All department heads, I want a staff meeting in 12 hours. Please acknowledge upon receipt of this order.

Upon hearing the order Studious determined it best to go to the bridge right away. He’d learned over time that if you walk into a meeting early everyone that arrives later sees you as a piece of the furniture, something that just blends in. If you arrived late however, then everyone noticed you. Unnecessary attention was something Studious was not looking for.

As he had finished reading the personnel files of the heads of staff, he headed from his quarters to the bridge.

When he arrived a figure using the hologram technology appeared. He had changed his appearance but Studious knew it was the enhancer. He had heard of the enhancers and originally voiced concerns about the project when it began. It seemed too many in command already saw our people as tools. Those commanders felt any action or inaction against their wishes made one defective. If the crew now even looked like machines that would only reinforce their flawed idea. Those that saw our men as tools saw me as a defective tool. In essence I was a hammer that could say no.

He had seen regular officers use the projection system before. Being a history buff, Studious remembered CNN on Earth had used a similar technology, though it only worked in after effects, in the days before the first deep space flight. He was not unnerved at seeing someone in a holographic projection, in fact he thought it was useful. It made high command see their commanders. Rather than seeing an unmoving picture and file, command had to look these men in the eyes before sending them to their deaths. It formed bonds between high command and captains something that was needed these days.

As he approached the captain and the enhancer, he thought about the personnel files he had read on both of them.
Mf_Luder

Luder watched as the seconds ticked down on the timer. The swirl began to dissipate and the normal star field returned as the Penelope dropped out of the wormhole. In the distance, roughly the same as from Saturn to Earth, both of the major habitable worlds of the Alpha Centauri system lay in wait.

He stood up and tried to not let on to the fact that a full-sized replica of Seeker had just appeared in front of him nearly scared him half to death. After Seeker spoke, Luder thought for a second and nodded.

"You can stay in that form as long as you wish. Remember that you have to eat something every once in a while. Right?" Luder gave a lopsided grin and turned to Studious, who just entered the command center.

"Colonel Studious. Welcome aboard."

Navigation, maintain this distance and bearing until we get a better idea what is going on here.

The fact that at least not a hint of communications had been established with the cents was enough to put a seed of caution in his gut.

Bring the ship to standby alert. Have the ready fighters on standby until further notice.

Bringing the ship to standby alert was just a way of ensuring that if anything went wrong, the Penelope wouldn't be caught with her pants down. Luder made his way over to the communications board.

"This is Captain mf_luder of the Earth ship Penelope to the Alpha Centaurian command. Please respond on any channel."

Luder waited a few minutes, then repeated the transmission. Still nothing. Nothing except that eerie silence the void was so famous for. Luder set the message to repeat every 5 minutes and headed back over to the command station. Still nothing. No ships had come up on the scanners, either.

"Gentlemen, we have a Federation carrier out here somewhere. It's an older make, probably two, maybe three generations before the Penelope. The ship itself should present a damned big footprint out here. She's got to be here somewhere." Luder hoped his words sounded convincing. He didn't even think he was convinced, really.

I want a full sensor sweep of the entire solar system, focusing on AC 1 and AC 2.

AC 1 and AC 2 were the official designations of the two worlds with population centers on them in this star system.
"Don't trust them, Luder. They're up to something out there. You know it and I know it. Hell, the Federation has been keeping a lid down on the incident with the Saratoga from three years ago. Something is brewing with the Cents. If you get sent out there, watch your six.

Luder remembered Vladimir's warning before he took command of the Penelope. Vlad seemed to think there was definitely a war about to start and had amassed a lot of "fringe evidence" that the Federation was hiding something huge. The "Saratoga incident Vlad referred to was something that should have made headline news but never did.

The USS Saratoga was a medical ship with 7,000 refugees on it, put out from a newly discovered world out near Cent space. On her way to Earth, she had to swing through Alpha Centauri for a refuel and somewhere in that period, she was attacked. The ship was completely obliterated and all aboard were lost to the void. The Federation stamped a classification on the whole thing and stopped it from ever getting out. A lot of people in Jake's old crew though the Cents did it. But no one could be sure. No one but Vlad.

Luder checked his watch. Still no response from the Cents.

The silence was loud.

Luder sat down in the command station and thought long and hard about he was getting ready to do. He looked at the button and looked back up at the crew.

"Please forgive me the cliche."

"Captain's log. Supplemental. The Penelope just arrived on the outskirts of Alpha Centauri and as of yet, there has been no reply to hails or any other indication the Penelope is out here. I have ordered a halt and the crew is now attempting to find out what we're facing out here."

Silo13

Knowing I’d been thrown into a Bio-Hazard container within moments of my *birth* didn’t bother me. Quite an easy mistake for a Lab R.At to make, especially with a new S.I.L.O (Self Integrating Life Organism).

What bothered me was once the Lab R.At found me (soft morphed in and out of the waste container), he tried to throw me out again.

Somewhere between life and refuse, for me at least, life won. The others from my birth lot were Decomposed.

Who was involved in making the decision I’d be allowed life was not entered into my memory, either intentionally or not I didn’t know, so in the end I was left to live with no one to thank or blame.
I wonder to date if somehow I’d slipped in between some crack in the system...in more ways than one.

Very early on I was taken from the S.I.L.O Containment Area to an Accumulation facility to integrate with a variety of other young life forms, though not encouraged to interact too closely with Bios.
My accumulation years were documented extensively as Lab had no template to compare and define my progress.
It seemed I was one of a kind.

My early behavior set far too many negative precedents to bode well for further S.I.L.O(s) research.
Lab made it clear they didn’t intend to scheduled any new lots for Animation so I’d probably remain, if not only a failure, a unique one.

I wasn’t blamed for my natural curiosity, one thing I had in abundance. 
Honesty be said, if anything my curiosity was encouraged.
Until it abruptly came to an end when I made an attempt to morph into a situation I’d no business being a part of.
I was caught trying to accompany a young Bios who was scheduled to leave Accumulation on a lovely-trip to the private quarters of her Bio-Donators who would there further the social rearing of their Bio-Offspring.
It seemed by only my stretch of imagination a young S.I.L.O would be welcome in such a setting.

The Creator Comity stepped in to rule it was against Nature to allow me to interact with Bio’s unsupervised and undocumented.
I’d been created to morph Bio’s (and others) not to be reared in their social habits and privacy-dwellings.

The S.S (S.I.L.O Scientists) deemed it far more important I learn the social workings of the Human’s (as they still insisted calling Bios) and in their collective opinion I should be encouraged to do so.
That is if a Gene-Set and a Bio-Donor pair could be found that would accept me.
None to date had been found.

So as those two factions spent eons debating, the ensuing period between conflict and decision succeeded in only one thing.

Time I spent maturing on my own.

For long periods they even forgot I existed.

Like now.
Skyfloating

Days passed without me having received any orders, requests or even questions. So I spent my time in the Holosphere, pre-planning some of the steps on our way. Not that much could be planned: Our specific mission was confidential. The files the Captain had given me contained some places to check out. My Holosphere was of the Navigator-Series and contained fairly accurate updates of most natural and artificial events in a radius of 10 solar systems.

Often going beyond my call of duty I would zoom in on planets looking for something beautiful or exciting...or even dangerous. No matter how advanced Holo-Nav is, there will always be a felt difference to actually being there. But this was good for now.

Antar

The small planet sized floating domicile where anter lived housed 300 beings. This one was quite small in comparison to the majority of Rigels floating housing. Like a tiny planet it was not only beautiful to look at from the distance, but much safer than the stationary domes and stations on the planet. Each one resonated different colors and were surrounded by interesting rings which were the parking areas for the occupants travel craft.

anter had a simple and older model much like a Volkswagen on earth but it was in good shape and got her anywhere within the galaxy she wanted to go. It was called the Star Skipper.

Everything she would need packed and anter scratched the head of her beloved Ebok a cross between cat and fish. Knowing her best friend and roommate would take good care of him until she returned, if she returned, she stepped into the transporter and beamed directly into the lead seat in the skipper.

No sooner than she set out for where the Yydryl was docked she could see the small dark module following her. "Yylrons" she said out loud to the reflection of the grey black craft catching up to her. Turning on the safety mode on her console, the shields were up and she set in the course
with warp 1 field drive.

No luck, it was approaching fast and she couldn't shake it. In a split second decision antar pulls straight up and back which placed her right on the tail of her would-be assailants.

No doubt it was the Yylron force attempting yet another hit on her for carrying out her parents work. They did not want to see the advanced nanos being interfaced with biological material. They wanted to remain pure, cold and ruthless instead. The introduction to biological material was a way to place a consciousness, a developing soul of sorts into the lifeless metal. This in turn made them suggestible at the very core of their creation, a move made only after much death and disaster as they were used for everything from clothing to furniture and space travel.

Pushing the limits on powerup, antar puts the final gentle touch on the magnetic laser torch and with one fiery blast the L'Ron craft was disintegrated into nothing more than a puff of ash and smoke.

Within minutes she was docking with the Yydryl, entering the docking port she followed the set of lights to a space that was tight but sufficient for her skipper.

No sooner than she exited a small robotic looking spider approached her with full scan activated and passed her a com badge. Placing it on her stark pearly white jumpsuit, antar headed into the Yydryl.

Much bigger than she had expected the transport node took her straight to her home away from home the Restorative Bay. RB for short.

The RB was also much bigger than she had imagined, with stark grey metal walls and floors, there would be plenty of room for her equipment and supplies. Off to the far side of the bay was another space, her living quarters, with views of the outside it was also going to be the perfect place to get away from the rest of the crew for her moments of privacy and meditation.

Ordering through the ships com her equipment and supplies to be delivered up from her skipper, antar sat on the examining table swinging her feet off the edge and wondering how many had already boarded and just how quickly she could get the team up for the exams and clearances.

Suicide An announcement came over the cons and she was ordered to an emergency in the Officers private quarters.

**Cadbury**

Would the remaining Yydryl crewmembers not already aboard please present themselves for duty as soon as possible.
Studious

Studious said while giving a salute “It’s good to be aboard sir.”

Studious was reassured of the captain’s cautiousness, so many young officers were all to ready to rush headlong into disaster.

The captain sent a message out to the Centaurians. But that message was met with not even a single radio reply. That was unusual to say the least. Studious wondered what reason they would have not to respond. Perhaps they were trying to draw a curious Penelope closer, or maybe some natural phenomenon was preventing their ability to respond. After all the Nimitz had lost contact maybe something in the area was preventing communication. However, the possibility lingered in Studious’ mind the Centaurians may not be there to reply.

Nothing was proven yet though, but Studious wanted to be ready for all possibilities.

The stillness was eerie. Stillness was peaceful, but total stillness was a harbinger.

That stillness was broken by the captain who said.

Originally posted by mf_luder

"Please forgive me the cliche."

"Captain's log. Supplemental..."

He wondered what the captain meant, after all a supplemental log was necessary. Especially in this case, something was not right here and good records needed to be kept of it. Accurate records would allow the information gathered from this search to add up. A hundred minute clues that might be missed alone can combine and become clear with good records. That got Studious thinking, we need more information. In fact we need a lot more.

“I heard this ship had no probes on board” Studious said.

The colonel said “heard” to cover the fact he had already read the official report.

“Is that true?”

Before waiting for a reply he already thought he knew the answer to Studious continued.

“If not, perhaps the engineering staff could rig a shuttle or fighter to run on autopilot. It could give us a closer, more detailed, scan of AC 1 and 2 without risking the entire ship.”
"Unfortunately, the probes were supposed to be in next week, but due to the nature of the mission, we were put into an emergency launch queue and the opportunity was lost. Your idea is a sound one, however. After the primary sensors finish their sweep, I'd like JohnQ to rig one of our shuttles to do a fly through of the system to try and figure out what is going on."

No sooner had the words left Luder’s mouth than did a beeping start up from the communications relay.

“Sir, we’re receiving a hail.”

“Put it on.”

“Earth ship Penelope. I am Praetorian Tau’Pas of the First Legion. You are to leave immediately.”

Luder looked over at Studious and raised an eyebrow.

“Praetorian Tau’Pas, we attempted to contact you several hours ago. We’re here on a mission of peace. We are attempting to locate a lost vessel of ours.” Luder waited. The relay was silent.

“There are no Federation ships here, Captain. Now take your vessel and leave. “The relay cut.

The science station lit up.

“Sir, we’re receiving multiple traces coming toward us at flank speed. We’re reading six triangles!”

“Are they powering up weapons?” Luder asked, taking his station.

“Sir, we are reading no power surges which would indicate such.”

Maintain standby alert.

“There is also a large, unidentified mass moving along about one half of a mile behind the triangles. No specific readings as of yet.”

Seeker, keep your eyes open out there. I do not like this at all.

Luder tried again, “Praetorian, we do not wish to engage you in battle, we are trying to find a lost vessel. If you would allow us to communicate with your higher, we could resolve this issue.” Luder chewed the inside of his cheek and cut the out-bound audio.

He thought to himself, watching the screens display the progress of the approaching vessels. “An attack formation? No. There has been no formal declaration of war here.” He knew better than to
play a game of chance, though, and keeping the ship on standby alert would prevent there being any overt signs of preparation for battle. A full alert would entail the weapons powering up and shields being raised. Best to not be the first ship to do that. No. Staying at standby would ensure the protection of the Penelope while keeping the other guys calm.

Luder could almost hear Vlad saying “I told you so, comrade.”

Ha.

Right.

The Cent ships moved ever closer to the Penelope.

**SeekerOfAUTMN**

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*Originally posted by mf_luder*

Seeker, keep your eyes open out there. I do not like this at all.

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With a flurry of blue light, the projected image of Seeker vanished.

"Eyes wide open Sir. All systems are operational and cycling up to combat readiness, with the exception of MagRail P47, but that is a minor issue. Several firing solutions are locked in place and ready to initiate at your disposal."

Inside his virtual world, Seeker was thrumming with anticipation. Subsystems within his implants were coming to life, systems he had never experienced before. His need to destroy was becoming almost unbearable.

Through the telemetry readouts, he could see the Triangles approach. Silently he willed them to be hostile.

In a small secluded corner of Seeker's brain, he was concerned. His hold on control was tenuous at best, and once released by the Captain's orders or aggressive action from the enemy, he didn't know if he could be reigned in.
"Sir! We're detecting power surges from each of the six Centaurian ships. Shall we raise shields?" The science officer looked frantic.

Full Alert, Code 1! Launch the ready fighters. Have them on standby pattern near the ship.

Luder couldn't believe the situation had escalated so quickly. The simple fact the Centaurians were coming in with weapons up meant they were after something. But what? Simply asking the Penelope to leave? Had to be more than that... didn't it?

The six triangles were significantly quicker than whatever the larger mass was behind them, but it was plundering along just fine, the entire group speeding toward the Penelope.

"Sir, I... you... I don't believe this."

Luder turned to the science officer, Lietenant Commander Varlas.

"What is it?"

"Sir, the unidentified mass... it's the Nimitz and she's primed for combat."

Luder's jaw dropped.

"What!?"

The first of the six triangles came within range of the Penelope and fired a blast of green energy toward the ship, pulling away as quickly as it had come in. The Penelope rocked slightly, the lights flickering a bit.

Luder ran to his station and strapped himself in.

Launch the remaining fighters and have them focus on those triangles.

Luder reached over and grabbed the communications relays.

"USS Nimitz, this is the USS Penelope. Please respond on any frequency. I repeat, USS Nimitz, this is the USS Penelope. Please respond...."

"Hello Luder." Her voice came across the speakers with an unusual clarity.

"Theresa? What are you doing here?"

"What else would I be doing here, Luder? I'm defending these people's right to freedom. That's what I'm doing." Her words took a minute to sink in.
"What freedom? Freedom under the Praetorian Guard? That's no freedom, Theresa, you know better than that."

The battle raged outside the Penelope as their conversation continued, the triangles, the fighters and the blasts from Seeker's intimate conversion with the Penelope. In all of that storm of activity, the Nimitz silently slid closer.

"I can't let you leave here, Luder. You already know too much." Theresa's voice sounded like ice.

"It doesn't have to be this way, Theresa. You know as well as I do what the Cents have done. What they are doing. You don't want to do this, please..." Luder clenched the edges of the armrests on the command station.

"I'm sorry, Luder. It is time." The line went dead.

On the screens, fighters started pouring out of the bays on the Nimitz, six squadrons worth, just as many as the Penelope.

Initiate anti-fighter fire. Engine room, prepare damage control parties. Medical bays, prepare for casualties. Navigation, hold position until those triangles and fighters are dealt with.

"Colonel Studious, prepare boarding ships. As soon as we get an opening, we're taking that ship back."

Luder watched as the fight unfolded around the Penelope.

In his mind's eye, he could see Vlad's face with his usual smug expression of knowing he was right all the time. Luder shook his head and thought, "Damn you Vlad. Damn you." The Penelope shook under another barrage of incoming fire.

Loam

Ensign loam made his way in flight-form to the Starship Yydryl.

Ensign loam.

The achievement was an important one.
After several decades of careful commitment—cultivating the right background and the correct impressions—loam had finally been granted this critical position on the Rigellian starship.

We, reposing special Trust and Confidence in your Loyalty, Courage, and good Conduct, do by these Presents Constitute and Appoint you to be an Officer in Our Royal Rigellian Reserve from the 80th day of Yidzick 2320. You are therefore carefully and diligently to discharge your Duty as such in the Rank of Ensign or in such other Rank as We may from time to time hereafter be pleased to promote you to, and you are in such manner on such occasions as may be prescribed by Us to exercise and well discipline in their duties such officers, men and women as may be placed under your orders from time to time and use your best endeavors to keep them in good order and discipline.

And We do hereby Command them to Obey you as their superior Officer and you to observe and follow such Orders and Directions as from time to time you shall receive from Us, or any superior Officer, according to the Rules and Discipline of War, in pursuance of the Trust hereby reposed in you.

Given at Our Court, at New Jufeddyn, Rigel the 80th day of Yidzick in the 2320th Year of Our Reign.

By Their Majesties’ Command.

loam was at last meeting his destiny, fulfilling a portion of prophecy uttered by the wrinkled lips of Mossian-Slea nuns for thousands of years throughout the expanse of space.

It seemed the Mossian-Slea were nearly everywhere. As one of the oldest races in the universe, they purposely integrated with alien civilizations on a grand, but subtle, scale. They influenced politics, commerce and religion. But the Mossian-Slea were a purely self-interested species with an unparalleled ability to convince others of their selfless fidelity to the native cause.

Starship Yydryl was loam’s current cause…

loam interfaced with the Yydryl as he approached the starship, considering the priorities he would need to immediately pursue upon recovery from his manner of travel.

The Mossian-Slea had the innate ability to convert into an energy form useful for space
flight, provided it was for short distances of a few light years. But the effort came at great expense, and the metamorphosis from flight to corporeal form could be an exhausting and painful process.

loam was already exceeding the outer limits of his ability and knew he would require recuperation for several hours.

Slowly, he entered the starship’s receiving bay, and with the gentility of a wind glider, rematerialized into his natural humanoid form and walked forward as if he had come in from a leisurely stroll.

Immediately, he headed for his quarters, laboring under the immense strain of his exertions. He needed replenishment—kjovil’um nutrients, a super algae with unique restorative abilities.

loam was relieved to have reached his quarters so quickly without interruption. His things had clearly arrived before hand and had been placed in proper order, including the warm vat of kjovil’um.

As loam lowered himself into the restorative green liquid, he could feel the scalding pain of his flight immediately leach from his exhausted limbs. He submerged himself for a few moments and returned with a blissful contentment not achievable by other means.

After some time, loam carefully considered his circumstances aboard the Rigellian starship. He would have many new challenges before him.

He knew little of the Captain or the other officers, though he was aware of the æxløsisian navigator, a race he very
much enjoyed.

If nothing else, **loam** would be in good company aboard the Yydryl.

As his form repaired its extreme strain, **loam** selected the human appearance he had used for nearly two hundred years. For some odd reason, its offensive nature made the **Rigellian’s** like and trust him all the more.

**loam** smiled at the obvious contradiction.

But **loam** did not need humor now. He needed rest—and several hours of it.

With the **kjovil ’um** nutrients fully utilized, **loam** left behind a vat of clear liquid, dried his body with a rough towel, and made his way to the bed area.

Collapsing in the center of the bed, he smiled and said, “Ensign...”

With his eyes closed, dreams of prophesy filled his head.

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**SeekerOfAUTMN**

**With sudden clarity, Seeker was unleashed.**

The Centaurian ship that had ventured close and fired a plasma lance was his first target. It had wandered into a broadside trajectory and also within range of the close range weaponry.

It didn't stand a chance.

With a tremendous resounding clang 49 MagRail batteries ejected high velocity iron rounds.

The Centaurians were not an innovative species like humanity. Their technology was stagnant and weak. The first volley collapsed their shields instantly. Within moments, Seeker lashed out with each of the four plasma lances.

The Penelope's light flickered as the lances taxed the power grid. Not five seconds later, the
lances had carved through the triangle and ruptured its reactor. The flash was astounding.

Before the first triangle had finished exploding, Seeker had committed to a trial of the new "Luminal" weapon system, and had launched a single innocuous missile at an incoming triangle.

With a flash, it vanished into hyperspace as its on board wormhole generator initiated a hop sequence. A microfraction of a second later, the tiny missile re-emerged from hyperspace next to the triangle...

At 9/10 the speed of light.

The computers aboard the Penelope could only calculate a hellishly bright streak as it punched through the triangle's shields, hull, interior, and reactor.

Such a tiny thing, Seeker reflected. Such tremendous destruction.

The fighters from the Nimitz moved into range of the anti-fighter defenses aboard the Penelope. Seeker opened up with the particle lasers and began sweeping them across the cloud of enemy fighters.

"Captain, two Centaurian Triangles down, requesting permission to return fire to USS Nimitz."

Masqua

NATURE

ALERT

Senior Celestial Navigator Fook Gai Dan Suicidlies dead in storage compartment 4A131.

A burn on the Navigator’s back is evidence of murder.