Destination Star Trek

Plan F

Chapter one

It was early Thursday afternoon June 9th 2022 and Steve wandered through the crowds in the North Terminal towards the Arrivals Gate at Gatwick airport, glancing up at the arrivals display he could see the flight from Amsterdam was now in. He smiled to himself as he remembered that he used to work here a few years back and wondered how many of the guys he knew where on shift today. Stephen was a aircraft engineer primarily but he was also a bit of a geek and nerd. He had loved Sci fi and horror since a kid and had written many a letter to various such magazines with his views and ideas. In the last few years this meant he had written a series of somewhat successful articles for a few magazines. This had lead him to befriend the lady who was now about to arrive in London. She was a language expert and teacher as well, but also like him a nerd and sci fi fanatic from Russia and they had become good friends. He was now single and she a widow and Stephen knew a candle burned in his heart for his friend. They were due to visit a Star Trek convention in London the next day and he was going to cover it for Infinity Magazine a retro sci fi mag and he hoped to get a few good interviews for it as well.

He quickly positioned himself so he could see all the passengers coming through the exit for the arrivals and then smiled as his heart leapt. Through the crowd appeared a very attractive slim lady of average height wearing tight Blue jeans a dark top and a classy light coloured loose fitting jacket. Her dark hair was cut short pixie like, she carried a shoulder bag and was pulling a compact trolley case behind her.

Stephen quickly and deftly darted through the crowd until he triumphantly stepped in front of the pretty lady.

“ Sofia!” he exclaimed throwing his arms wide in a welcoming gesture.

Sofia Nerovnaya stopped and gasped at the surprise then recognising her friend she smiled and plunged into the offered embrace. Stephens arms wrapped around her , he had set down the case he was carrying and picked his friend up in a bear hug and kissed her on the lips then covered her face in more kisses. She smiled and shook her head.

“ Put me down you big daft Ox,” she giggled.

Stephen kissed her again and laughed,” No I will never put you down again…ever”

She tilted her head at him and chuckled,” So Stephen, your going to carry me all the way into London then?”

Stephen still holding her off the ground smiled back..” I just might.”

With a mock frown Sofia cautioned him,” Stephen you must put me down.”

With an audible sigh Stephen relented but when her feet hit the ground the two friends hugged again and Sofia kissed Stephen on his cheek.

“I wasn’t sure you’d ever come…”said Stephen happily. ”God though I am happy you are here Sofia.. It’s a dream finally come true.”

She smiled back at him,” I told you I would come.”

Stephen picked his bag up and grasping his friends hand he proceeded to gently but confidently lead her through the crowds.

“ It’s all sorted everything is arranged Hotel booked. The editor arranged a letter for us to be admitted to the Convention with access all areas and we have a 20 minute interview slot with Robert Picardo in the morning and with Jeri Ryan at 5pm. We have all day tomorrow and the evening at the convention in the Excel Centre.. Then Saturday we fly from here to Belfast and I chauffer you around the sights of Ireland well the North this time. I have a hotel booked in Portrush Saturday and Sunday we stay in Carrickfergus, you may meet some of my lot…then home Monday.”

Sofia smiled, “ all sorted then I see. So do we drive into London?”

Stephen laughed and shook his head,” No I am leaving the car here we get the train and then the tube its quicker I promise… Trust me and don’t forget I used to work here honey.”

“ Have you worked everywhere?” she quipped squeezing her friends hand.

Stephen smiled ,” Well it seems like it sometimes Sofia . So how are your lads? All sorted out at home I hope?”

“ Peter is looking after the Flat and he knows to walk Rex our dog, he seems happy…”

“Of course he is happy he will have his girlfriend in there,” Stephen laughed.

Sofia shrugged,” Probably. Well tomorrow Michael after school is going to stay at his best friends Uris place. It’s Uri’s birthday so his dad is taking the lads to his naval Base open day on the Saturday. Then there’s a birthday party on the Sunday, The boys will love that and Uri’s mom will drop him back to mine on the Tuesday after school. Michael is very excited.”

Stephen leaned down and kissed her pink cheek,” It is good they are growing lads Sofia so it is time for mum to have some fun and a adventure now.”

The two friends laughed and wandered happily through the crowd as Sofia described her Journey thus far. Stephen had already purchased the train tickets so they quickly boarded the train and headed off towards London.

“I am so glad this worked out ,” sighed Stephen as he sat beside her. “ I didn’t tell you but I nearly cancelled it I was taken into to hospital on Monday.”

Sofia was shocked,” Stephen you never said. You idiot what happened? Are you ok?”

She hugged him and he shrugged and looked embarrassed.

“ I was lucky it was a infection of the Appendix not quite full appendicitis but it almost could have been. I was told I was told I was very Lucky as a specialist was showing some students around and he sussed it straight away. It was bloody sore but the antibiotics did the trick and by yesterday I was ok.” Stephen could see Sofia was still glaring at him,” I just didn’t want to worry you..ok”

Sofia snuggled into her friend,” You said no more secrets ever. Remember?”

Stephen nodded and gently hugged her, “ I promise no more secrets, anyway I am off the fizz for another 7 days so no champagne for me.”

“I don’t care,” she sighed.” I am happy you are well.”

“ However I insist when we go to Ireland you try a Guinness with a shot of Tia Maria in it Sofia.. You will love it,” urged Stephen.

The two laughed and chatted as the train sped towards and across London. Once there Stephen led Sofia by the hand as they continued to chat and laugh onto the London Underground Tube network. Eventually they got off at North Greenwich tube station within sight of the Excel Centre. Stephen was a fountain of daft information and facts about London but Sofia lapped up all the information like a sponge.

“ The first Tube was a tunnel under the river in 1843 built by the Brunels father and son but twenty years later the first real tube network opened and it just grew and grew.. Paddington to Farringdon was the first real route that started it.”

As they approached the huge Excel Centre they could see the signs for the convention

“ Destination Star Trek 2022 ! “ announced Sofia dramatically.

“ Should be great,” mused Stephen hopefully. “ Most of the crews will be there Next Gen onwards. So a write up for the event and possibly 2 separate interviews that’s 3 articles.. plus you get a chance to meet and get autographs with all the stars.”

“ It’s a shame Jolene Blalock won’t be there,” sighed Sofia. “ A shame too you didn’t get to interview Patrick Stewart.”

“ Meh ,” snorted Steve happily enough. “We get free in and I can chat to the Doctor and Seven…you can get Patricks autograph if you want? Remember I am only a part timer and Infinity isn’t the biggest player on the block. It will be the tv shows and mega magazines Empire etc….”

As they approached the entrance Stephen put his free hand on Sofias and affectionately squeezed her..” I don’t care anyway I have my own T’pol.”

Sofia gave him a mock frown,” I am no ones T’pol.. I am my own free person.”

“ Damn Right…” chuckled Stephen.

They neared the large Excel Centre Complex and headed to the Hotel entrance The whole area was covered from floor to ceiling with Star Trek Logos and pictures of Various famous crew members the ships and their many foes. There were full size figures Borg and Klingon warriors and a replica Q, they both laughed and paused at each figure to take selfies with the figures.

“ Queen of the Selfies,” joked Stephen to Sofia. She chose to ignore the remark and instead cast her judgemental eye over the Borg.

“They are well done,” she observed dryily.

Stephen chuckled and they then wandered over to the reception desk, he gave his name to the girl and she smiled back enthusiastically and handed him a a envelope.

“ Welcome Mister Mccloughlin , here’s your key cards for room 110 on the second floor in the envelope is a programme for the weekend and a list of all the facilities that are available. Your room is a double with twin beds we can change it for you both to room with a single king size or upgrade you to a larger suite….”

“Twin beds are fine,” said Sofia taking the proffered envelope.

“Yeah that’s great,” agreed Stephen with rather less enthusiasm.

The girl smiled back and then pointed over to some doors,” Through those doors are the lifts and the stairs and you will need your room card to enter them..”

“ No probs,” said Stephen as he smiled and led Sofia away. They quickly found their room and started to get settled. It only took a few minutes and Stephen checked his watch .

“ Ok time for our adventure to start, come on Sofiaa.”

Sofia accepted his hand but looked puzzled, ”My adventure started this morning when I left St Petersburg, what have you got planned for us now Stephen?”

Stephen smiled enthusiastically,” Let’s go find out?”

He led her out of the room and as they chatted and joked they made their way out of the hotel and back to the nearby tube station. They quickly took the tube to Waterloo Station and Stephen led them to where the London Eye stood nearly opposite the houses of Parliament and Westminster abbey on the other side of the Thames. The London eye or the Millennium Wheel as some called it was a a huge cantilevered observational wheel with Gondolas over 135 metres tall that took visitors up to see most of London’s sites. The largest one in Europe it rotated slowly each ride or flight as they called it took around half an hour and was a great way to see the sights of London. Sofia was ecstatic and very happy as they both stepped forward for their flight that Stephen had pre booked. As they went up Stephen and her took what seemed like a millions pics and selfies and looked at all the historic sights.

“ Next time we will do The Abbey the Tower and all the sights,” Promised Stephen.

“ I never thought I would be here,” mused Sofia. “ I am not sure when I can do it again.”

“Look do’nt worry , “ urged Stephen. ”Next time is my treat.”

Sofia reached over pulled Stephen over and kissed him lightly on the lips,” You’re a good man Stephen but we will see…”

When their flight on the London Eye was done Stephen led Sofia away and back along the the South side of the Thames embankment all the time telling her details of what they were seeing or his past trips. They followed the Thames embankment back towards the millennium bridge back in the direction of the Excel Centre.

Sofia noticed Stephen checking his watch..” What have you planned now?”

Stephen pointed to a white building that somehow looked out of place in the modern buildings all around yet still looked as if it should be there.

“ Now let me show you the Globe theatre,” he announced. “ Home at one time to Will Shakespeare’s Company of Players. We have a tour booked and we are just in time.”

He was pleased to Sofia looked suitably impressed and they quickly skipped up the steps to the theatres entrance where he collected their pre booked tickets. The tour was just about to start and they were led into the theatre and shown around it. They were in luck as the actors were rehearsing for their evening show and they were able to witness them at work but from behind the scenes. They both listened fascinated as the history of the place was explained to them and how it came to be. Taken behind the stage curtain they were shown how it worked and the workshops that supported the many performances. Sofia asked many questions of the Tour guide and he was impressed as was Stephen by her knowledge and interest.

“ Can we come again and see a performance?” asked Sofia.

“Winning you around am I ?” asked Stephen. ”Going to visit again are we?”

Sofia smiled ,”…perhaps…we shall see.”

Stephen pulled her over, kissed her forehead and they both smiled,” enjoying it?”

She nodded and gave him a hug.

“Where next ?” she asked .

Well its gone 6 now so there is a nice restaurant I am told by trip advisor close to the Arena so I think we will go get something to eat. Then there are a few pubs we can sit and chat before heading back to the Hotel.

“ After we eat can we go back to the hotel, don’t forget I was up before 6am this morning Stephen?”

Stephen laughed, he was as always easy going,” No worries Sofia we can go back to the hotel after. I am happy either way honey.”

The restaurant was fine and had a good vegan selection and although not a vegan Stephen opted for a spicy veggie stir fry and it was nearly 8pm when they headed back to the hotel. As they passed the reception the girl on the desk called out to Stephen.

“Mr Mccloughlin there was a delivery for you,” she announced triumphantly.

Stephen and Sofiaa approached the Desk to see the girl producing a parcel well wrapped in plastic but with a label clearly marked Mr S Mccloughlin Room 110 London Excel Centre Marriot Hotel with todays date on it. It didn’t’ t look heavy and was about a foot square and a couple of inches thick.

“Your editor?” wondered Sofia.

Stephen picked it up and squeezed it,” Naw he doesn’t know we are here. He probably thinks I am staying in Dunstable at my daughters and coming down on the train. Possibly from the organisers for the show though. Perhaps our magazine is moving up the celebrity list . Was there a card or a delivery note?

The girl gave him a delivery note with just an address of the delivery firm on it, Stephen accepted and slid it into his jeans back pocket . Thanking the receptionist he lifted up the parcel and together he and Sofia they headed up to their suite. When they got back to the room Sofia kicked of her shoes and started to sort her clothes for the morning. She had brought the red one piece suit that would make her look the part of T’pol from the Star Trek Enterprise series. Stephen looked through his bag and found a small multitool he always carried with him on away trips..

He could hear Sofia in the bathroom brushing her teeth as he slowly snipped one edge of the parcel open peeling that edge down he gently coaxed the contents out onto the coffee able that he was sat by. There was a Stiff and Hard Plastic case he unzipped and inside that was a electronic tablet about ten by nine inches and about an inch thick. There were also three further pouches which he sat down also on the coffee table. Stephen sighed and opened the first plastic pouch, inside were 3 jet black octoganal crystals each about six inches long just less than a inch wide and at the end of each seemed to a metal fitting. Stephen looked at it and it resembled a female socket with 8 pinholes for possibly locating the crystal into a electrical plug mechanism. The crystals felt cold too touch and were the deepest darkest jet black that Stephen could ever remember seeing.

“ What is it?” called Sofia who was rubbing moisturiser onto her skin.

Stephen chuckled as he set the crystals down and picked up another of the pouches this one was flat and when he opened it up it contained various newspaper cuttings all fairly recent. He spotted a local English one only two days old detailing a break in at the Natural history museums geology department and the stealing of mineral samples. There was another recent one from a German paper and Stephen could make out a similar theft from a German museum. There was a French one dated a week ago and one from Australia just 8 days ago detailing a similar event in Sydney Australia. Stephen scanned the list of mineral samples taken and one name clearly screamed out at him.

“ Obsidian..” he muttered. “ I think..”

“ Pardon? “ queried Sofia who landed gently on the Sofa beside him.” What is it?”

“Not sure yet,” muttered Stephen as he set the cuttings down. Sofia picked up the Tablet and turned it on as it fired up Stephen opened the last Pouch and as he unzipped it he lifted out five pads of tightly wrapped notes.

Stephen nudged Sofia as he peeled the cellophane Clingfilm back on one of the pads and he began to flick the corners of the notes counting them in his head.” Sofia these are used one thousand dollar bills…I make it about one hundred in each pad.”

He quickly checked the other pads… same notes… same thickness. “ Oh my God . That’s half a million dollars…Sofia”

“ it must be a wind up for the convention, they must be fakes,” reasoned Sofia.” A publicity stunt surely for a new Trek movie or series?”

Stephen checked the Tablet,” It needs a username and Password.”

He quickly turned it over and took the battery pack out then put it back down, “ leave it Sofia for a few minutes.”

Sofia looked at her friend she looked confused but intrigued …Stephen took up the newspaper cuttings and started to enter the details into his search engine on his phone.

“These check out there was a robbery in London and someone stole Obsidian and the same in Sydney, so these are for real, “he said.

“What’s so special about Obsidian then?” asked Sofia.

Stephen shrugged and then picked up one of the long Octogonal crystals examining it carefully.” Its always been valuable. I remember reading in the earliest civilisations it was as valuable as gold and often used as money. It can be razor sharp and some surgeons still use it as a cutting edge as it can be sharper than tungsten steel. Hippy types also believe it has other magical properties and I think it can keep a electrical charge too.”

Stephen held the crystal using some of the cellophane wrapped around it and rubbed the crystal against the sofas material vigorously then held it upright “,If I am right we insulated it and we should have now generated a static electric charge and its storing it… And as I bring it closer to my finger it should jump to earth and give a small spark and me a blatt.”

Sofia watched as her friend brought the crystal closer to his finger at about half an inch a spark jumped from the crystal to his finger and Stephen yelped and jumped in pain.

“ Fuck I didn’t expect that to be that strong! “ he exclaimed. Stephen looked at his finger and blew on it. “ that was quite a blatt…Shitt!”

Sofia couldn’t help but smile…Stephen realised it was funny and smiling said..” Ok now put the battery package back in see what happens.”

She did and turned it back on and a load of messages flashed up and then a restore factory settings came on.” Quick ,” urged Stephen.

Sofia clicked on it the icon and the tablet sprang into life and as she searched the tablets memories Stephen reasoned…”We have some Obsidian that’s been altered so it can be plugged in to a device…articles that show its being stolen world wide and we just saw it really does have properties similar at least as a capacitor to store a charge and perhaps help build it up. Plus almost 500,000 dollars if this is a Ruse Sofia then it’s a good one.”

Sofia said,” ok there are some uploaded files otherwise nothing else saved to memory.”

”Lets see them then ,” suggested Stephen. Who then went to the room fridge and got two bottles of water. After a few moments she showed Stephen the screen it was covered in a strange indecipherable language. The letters were very strange.

Sofia sighed ,” Stephen I am a language expert and teacher I have studied many languages … but this is unknown to me.”

She then clicked on another icon and another page flipped up with a new language different than the one before and again she scrolled down to another page. She flicked on another page and sat upright quickly.. Looking at Stephen she said , “I saw this in university Stephen… this is Sanskrit and is nearly 4000 years old, a almost dead language but if I can work this one out it may give me a clue to the others…”

Stephen remembered his history,” Like the Rosetta stone.”

Sofia smiled at him pleased at her friends knowledge,” Exactly…”

She then hit another icon and up came a series of diagrams that looked technical…she offered the tablet to Stephen. “Over to the engineer.”

Stephen studied it , “Its like a wiring and schematic diagram for a component and a larger machine. I can’t read the words but the symbols and numbers.”

Stephen pointed to the numbers and formulas on the drawing , “ these are Hexi decimal figures we use them in computer coding as its simpler than using old fashioned binary.”

Stephen pointed to a weird upside down pyramid drawing that had a load of identical components inside all interconnected to it with lines and from it too various sources and these lines fed into other components. Beside it where various figures…Stephen clicked on a icon next to one of the symbols that represented the identical components. A picture appeared and both Stephen and Sofia looked at each other. Sofia picked up one of the Obsidian crystals and they both could see that’s was identical to the one in the picture.

“ That’s it they are combined transformers to boost the power and as super capacitors to store it until it is released…and this pyramid affair shows they are connected both in series and parallel 31 crystals in each. These figures show the power builds up exponentially Sofia that’s huge, frigging huge…” gasped Stephen. ”We know pure obsidian like these are jet black, now they appear Black because they are absorbing the light and not reflecting it. Now light is a form of energy Sofia and someone has cottoned on how to exploit this…and it may not be just light they are absorbing…Also I know all crystals can refract light, they can bend and split it so perhaps this is part of it too…..”

Sofia hit another icon and this time it brought up the overall view of the completed machine,” What do you think it is?”

Stephen shook his head,“ I cannot read it but it looks like a large transmitter or receiver but look there are loads of those Crystal super capacitors pyramid devices and they are all joined up so it is a very powerful machine. Also there is Obsidian crystals all over the Transmitters as well..”

She clicked on another icon and a new series of pages appeared in another new language.

“ I think these are Runes,” she suggested,” and I think I remember now one of the earlier pages was cuneiform all ancient languages but arranged in a modern style like they were written today. Sofia went to her bag and fetched a memory stick which she plugged into the tablet.

“ Runes Like in Vikings ?” asked Stephen.

“ Can you translate any of it?” Stephen asked.

Sofia unplugged the Memory stick and sighed, “Perhaps if I start with the Sanskrit I can pick a few words out.”

She went to her case and lifted out a notepad then sat back down beside Stephen and looking at the pad she began tapping on her phone and scribbling on the Notepad.

“ This is not how I expected us to spend our first night together,” mused Stephen almost sadly.” This better not be a hoax.”

As Sofia continued to scribble notes she said to Stephen..” It took a lot off effort to compile these languages even when I was in university studying Sanskrit It could take me a week to translate even a page and sometimes not even then.”

“ Plus the money and the robberies and the Obsidian,” mused Stephen.” This is not how I hoped tonight would turn out Sofia?”

“ What did you think might have happened tonight Stephen?” asked Sofia coyly.

Stephen chuckled and shook his head,” Don’t go all Vulcan on me now. Sofia we have been friends for well over a year now and you know how I feel,”

Sofia put down everything and turned to her friend then cupped his face in her hands.

“ Stephen ,” she said.” You too mean the world to me but don’t pressure me ok.”

She gently leaned forward and kissed him softly on the lips, “ now shut up and let me look at this before I get too tired..”

Stephen nodded in agreement and then picked up his phone and started to research ancient languages and Sanskrit in particular..” alright but we have a busy day in the morning I have set my alarm for 7am ok .”

The two of them sat together each working on their own part of the mystery after ten minutes Stephen borrowed a piece of paper and also began to scribble down some notes.

“Did you find anything?” asked Sofia.

Stephen sighed,” well… ish sort of I googled Sanskrit experts uk and found out this week at a church in London the uks leading ancient language expert was laid to rest. The University professor who gave his church eulogy stated it is sad as he is one of six such leading language experts who have died in the last two months across the globe. He was of course referring to their age and the hope that they need new blood….However.

Well yesterday one of our tabloid scandal papers followed up on this with a sensational story the suspicious circumstances of these academics deaths… they also refer to a US paper that also alleges a mystery as two of their language experts just disappeared.”

Sofia nodded,” well I have something…… I went instead to look for words and symbols that repeat themselves so suggesting common words or important ones. Such as and, the, of, to, etc.. and I found some of those but one or two longer ones that are repeating which may mean a important word or phrase or even a name. If I concentrate on those it may help with the rest..

Stephen then showed her the delivery note..” This is nonsense the address phone number and the website are total bollocks…totally fake.”

Sofia soon got up and laid the tablet which she plugged into a charger on her bed along with her phone and the notepad. She picked up a t shirt and disappeared into the bathroom emerging a few minutes later wearing just the baggy shirt. She folded up her clothes and put them into her case then climbed into her bed and after getting settled she continued her studies.

“I brought a spare charger,” said Stephen dipping into his bag and then passing it over to her.” For your phone.”

She accepted it with a smile and plugged it in beside her bed and then into her phone before resuming her studies. Stephen yawned and getting up made his way to the bathroom where he brushed his teeth. Coming back into the room he undressed down to his boxers and climbed into his bed and carefully plugged his own phone into its charger and tried to concentrate on their joint mystery. After perhaps half an hour he yawned and realised Sofia had turned the rooms main lights off except her own bedside one.

“Stephen? Are you still awake or Did you fall asleep??” asked Sofia softly.

“of course I am awake,” he lied looking over at her.

“ Should we not go to the police about this? There are break ins lots of dodgy money and possibly mysterious deaths?” she asked in a slightly nervous tone..

“Lets see if they are connected first we are at a sci fi convention everyone might say it’s a hoax and it still could be…”

“If it is real it could be dangerous,” mused Sofia softly. ”according to those papers people have died in mysterious ways..”

Stephen turned around properly and looked at his friend,” Sofia they would have to get through me to harm you honey. Remember I grew up in Belfast in the bad old days. I had experts try and get rid of me and I am still around … I won’t let anything happen to you. I promise”

“ You’re a good man Stephen,” said Sofia softly smiling at him.

A few minutes later he heard a rustling noise and felt Sofia slide into his bed under the covers.” Turn over,” she said. “ I will cuddle into you..”

He felt her slide up against him and wrap her arm around spooning him, he could feel her breath on his skin and he could smell her fragrance and it felt good. He lifted her hand kissed it then wrapped it back up around his chest and sighed contentedly ….slowly he drifted off…

Chapter two

Stephen yawned and stretched in his bed and he slowly recalled all off yesterday’s events then as he rolled onto his back he realised Sofia was not there. He quickly glanced to his right and she was not in the other bed either so rubbing the sleep from his eyes he sat up.

“ Good morning sleepy,” said Sofia. Who was sitting on the couch as before and seemed to studying the tablet and making notes again. She was wearing her one piece scarlet outfit that made her look like the Vulcan science officer T’pol from the Star Trek series Enterprise and looked stunning. Stephen smiled and then checked the bedside clock it was six fifty am and reached for his phone to turn his alarm off.

“What time did you get up?” he asked.” Did you sleep ok?”

“ I slept fine Stephen,” replied Sofia.” Remember its eight Fifty now back in St Petersburg I would have been up hours ago.”

“Have you made much progress?” asked Stephen.

She smiled , “ Yes I worked out the fourth Script is in Mayan Glyphs, and the writing on the technical drawings is indeed a form of Scandinavian Runic script.”

“ You’re a star Sofia bloody amazing, “ responded Stephen as he slid out of the bed and stood up asking,” Did you try the shower?”

“Yes, “ she responded.” It was Lovely and quite powerful.”

Stephen strolled over to the bathroom ,” shower then Breakfast…ok?”

“You seemed to sleep very wel l,” observed Sofia matter of factly as Stephen turned on the shower. ”You snored Stephen but it was cute..not loud .. cute contented little snores.”

“ I can’t hear you…LA La la! “ responded Stephen laughing as he got into the shower. Sofiaa grinned and returned to looking at the Tablets screen and scribbled more notes on the notepad. A few minutes later Stephen returned with a towel wrapped around his waist and drying himself with another. He sat on his bed and pulling over his bag he selected fresh boxers which he pulled on then after spraying himself with body spray he pulled on a T Shirt then socks and his grey jeans. He then opened a cupboard and gestured to Sofia.

“ Here is the Room safe, we can put it all in here and anything else valuable. When we go to breakfast,” he suggested. “We cannot leave that money lying around and those crystals and tablet must be valuable too.”

Sofia nodded in agreement and turning the tablet off passed it too him. He put the other pouches containing the Crystals and money inside with it and the sheets of paper with his notes on it and the newspapers cuttings as well. He then pulled on his desert boots and after tying the laces he stood up and offered Sofia his hand.

“ Shall we go grab breakfast?”

Sofia smiled and standing up accepted his hand and picking up her shoulder bag they left the room and headed down to the dining hall on the ground floor of the Hotel. It was a buffet style arrangement for breakfasts and after waiting for to be seated Stephen quickly selected a bowl of cereals and some fruit and a glass of fresh orange juice. Sofia had selected a bowl filled with variety of fruit and a black coffee with toast and they both sat down. Stephen sipped his Orange and then asked his companion,” what else did you find? Anything useful?”

Sofia smiled and nodded,” Your analogy of comparing it to the Rosetta stone was quite accurate Stephen. There are four lengthy texts and I believe they are all identical. I found the word spacings to match over the four texts but its not so simple.. We write normaly left to right horizontally but the fourth text had me stumped until I realised it was Mayan Glyphs in vertical lines and going from right to left almost opposite to what you expect but then once I noticed that, the words began to align. This means it ties in four major ancient Languages across 3 continents of the ancient world.”

Stephen was impressed by his companions skill,” Wow great work Sofia.. It all sounds very like that Chariots of The Gods eh? Eric Von Daniken would have loved you.”

Sofia nodded realising he was referring to a famous book that had been popular in the 1970’s that claimed all the worlds major ancient civilisations had been guided by aliens.

“Did you Make out any of the individual words? “he asked.

Sofia nodded as she ate her breakfast, “A few but some words can have multiple meanings Heavens can be Cosmos or space even, Legends can mean History or tales.. I think it’s a history of a people or race…. a classic origin tale with the usual warnings for it to be kept secret from their enemies..i worked that one out quickly..I remembered the phrase enemies from my early uni days.”

“ So who were these people” asked Stephen as he chomped on his cereal. Sofia shrugged ,”well I am not sure how to pronounce it Stephen or if I have got it even right. No one speaks Sanskrit these days much. I think however they called themselves The M.. E ..L.. K.. O.. R ..N.. E and they think they come from a different heaven and have therefore divine powers and divine authority over lesser beings.”

“ A different Heaven,” mused Stephen.

“Yes they can travel from their heaven to our mortal plain by using a doorway a gateway or portal and they use a word similar to Samayi which could mean lifespans duration or I dunno Time perhaps, “ reasoned Sofia. Stephen juggled these thoughts in his mind.

“ So they use a heavenly …cosmos..Time ….Doorway,” he mused.

Sofia sipped on her coffee and nodded, “ If I am right…. I have too double check it Stephen Its been years and I am only using my Mobile phone to access the net…”

Stephen smiled at his friend,” How about Cosmic Time portal? Or Space time portal?”

Sofia smiled ,” That’s if I am right…Stephen but yes…it could fit.”

Stephen smiled,” Sofia you’re a bloody genius I am sure you are right..but it sounds a bit Sci fi to me and we are here at a sci fi convention.”

“ So a hoax? “ queried Sofia. “ for the event a publicity stunt for a future Star Trek show or future movie perhaps.”

Stephen pulled out his wallet and showed Sofia that he had two of the thousand dollar bills in it,” Look there is a Bureaux de Change by reception and its open. Let’s see if these are real..if they are real its no hoax or it is a bloody expensive one. I will just get them changed into UK pounds ok and they will know if they are forgeries or not”

Sofia nodded as she pushed her bowl away,” OK let’s do it then. If they are cheap forgeries we will know its all just a elaborate but daft hoax.”

The two of them then got up and left the dining room and headed back to the Hotel reception and just beside it was a Bureaux de Change. The man at the Kiosk the cashier took their room details then accepting the two notes he passed them under a ultra violet scanner. Stephen and Sofia both held their breathes as this was done.

“ I can give you fourteen hundred and twenty pounds sir,” announced the cashier.” How would you like this? I could give you One thousand in fifty pound notes and the rest in twenties?”

Stephen looked at Sofia then nodded to the Cashier,” Yes that would be great.”

The cashier quickly counted out the money and putting it in a envelope handed it to Stephen who smiled gratefully as he accepted it. As they walked away Stephen stuffed the envelope in his jeans pocket after giving the cashier a twenty pound tip.

“ Shit this means it is for real Sofia,” he whispered softly. ”It means we have around half a million dollars upstairs.”

”Another time I might say let’s run away but now…So the information on the Tablet, could be very important,” reasoned Sofia.

As they entered the Lift Stephen sighed, “ ok lets get through today Sofia we came here for this convention let’s get through this then we can figure it out. I have spent months looking forward to this day and this weekend…ok ?”

Nikita looked up at her friend ,”Agreed, but then we will have to do something.”

As they stepped out of the lift they noticed several cleaners in the corridor a man and two women pushing hand carts along loaded up with fresh linen and spare toiletries. Then Stephen noticed two men by their room door one a short dumpy man looking middle aged and the other a thin young man but they just looked slightly odd and out of place. Their similar clothes just looked wrong for London and were very new almost crispy seventies style. Both were dressed in matching light Brown trousers and matching short light brown jackets. They were evidently discussing something important but trying to do so quietly though unsuccessfully. The younger man who was thin and about the same height as Stephen wore a woolly hat pulled down over his ears which was surprising as today was a actually warm June day.

Stephen leaned over to Sofia and whispered ,” Play it cool please.”

Just then the Older plumper man knocked on the door to Stephen and Sofia’s room whilst the younger man looked on nervously. The younger man then glanced and noticing Stephen and Sofia’s arrival , he hastily nudged his companion.

“ Lieutenant,” he hissed.

The other man glowered back, “ I told you do not use my rank in Public Toreq.”

“Ok guys I think you have the wrong room,” stated Stephen in his most friendly and innocent manner. “ Are you guys here for the convention too?” The plumper man shot his companion a glare then looked at Stephen and Sofia .”

“ Yes that’s our room,” stated Stephen.

The short plump stranger looked quite embarrassed and red in the face,” No” He stated,” there must be a error this is our room and it is booked in our names.”

Stephen smiled .” oh really and you are?”

“ I am Steven Maclufflin,” he stated loudly but awkwardly as if he had never said it before. Stephen smiled as the plump stranger had totally mispronounced his surname as many strangers had in the past.

“ Fine,” said Stephen agreeably as he could.” Have you proof of ID?”

The man then reached into his pocket and produced a scarlet passport and showed it to Stephen.. Sure enough it was Identical to Stephens passport name everything was correct but instead it had a picture of this new guy but it clearly wasn’t right.

“ ok guys That’s the wrong passport, that’s the old EU passport I have a nice new shiny Navy blue one now ..Didn’t you guys hear about Brexit?”

The two strangers looked at each other. The chubby one hissed at the younger one,” What is Brexit? You were meant to check these things out.”

For some reason Stephen didn’t feel threatened by the two strangers. Over the years he had met more than a few dodgy even dangerous characters and these two didn’t seem like either. He smiled reassuringly at Sofia then spoke loudly at the two.“ Look lieutenant I am Stephen Francis Mccloughlin you cannot even say my name right and I booked this room months ago and your using a forged out of date passport. So why don’t you come clean with me and tell us the truth on what your doing by our room?”

“ That’s not right… you should be in hospital for another week,” said the younger man who looked very sheepish all of a sudden.

Stephen smiled,” Funny that, but I got better.”

Stephen though strangely felt emboldened and prodded the chubby man in his chest with his finger. “ however how did you guys know that I was ever in hospital to begin with?”

The smaller man was obviously exasperated and after glowering at his companion turned back to Stephen,” I do not care about the room . A friend had a parcel delivered here for us to pick up. All we want is that Parcel and you can keep your room!”

Stephen looked at Sofia then back to the two strangers , “ Ok you lied about who you are, your trying to get in my room so how do I know the parcel is for you?”

“ So you have the Parcel then?” queried the chubby stranger with apparent interest..

“ If it is for you tell us what is in it?” asked Stephen.

Both strangers looked horrified.

” Yoou Opened it! NOOO! “ exclaimed the younger one.

Stephen puffed himself up and again prodded the chubby one gently in the chest,” It was addressed to me and if it was for you,I would think you would have some idea what was in it?”

“ A information device,” said the younger one.

“A electronic Tablet ,” corrected Sofia.

“ Yes a Tablet… that’s what I meant,” said the younger one hastily.

“And what else ? “ asked Stephen.

Both the strangers looked confused so Stephen prompted them,” Obsidian..?”

“ is that the crystalline shard? “ asked the plumper one.

Stephen looked at Sofia and nearly smiled,” Who are you two Tweedle Dee and Tweddle Dumb? I mean who sent you here ? The Muppet show as a comedy act?”

The older Plumper one looked visibly defeated now,” Look its vital you give us the package you have no idea how important it is. The mix up with the names was wrong but the information on this tablet and the crystal shards is very important.. It is of no use to you and well beyond your comprehension and your petty minds.”

Now it was Sofia who felt annoyed by these two,” You mean the information about the Melkorne and the Cosmic Time Portal?”

“ And how it works?” added Stephen.

“ The information was encoded in a unknown language,” muttered the young one.” We were meant to take it to be deciphered.”

“SSShh Ensign,” said the Plump one.” These Terrans know far too much already.”

“ Terrans who can translate and understand what you cannot,” reasoned Sofia. “ Implying you are not of Terran origin?”

Stephen quickly reached over and lifted the young mans woolly hat off showing it was covering up two decidedly pointed ears.

“ Oh my,” sighed Sofa.” A Vulcan?”

“ Or Romulan,” added Stephen.

“ I am Vulcan of course,” protested the clearly embarrassed young man.

“ Ok so the best place to hide two aliens in London and one being a pointy eared Vulcan is at a Star Trek convention,” reasoned Stephen.

“ There is some logic too it,” suggested Sofia.

“ See,” agreed the young Vulcan.” I was right.”

“ Not about the room and his illness,” suggested the older one.

“ The time lines are vague about this period, only notable figures and events are well known between 2020 and 2050 Lieutenant,” countered the younger man.

“ Hang on are you saying you two are from the Federation Temporal Agency? “ asked Sofia.

“ Never mind that Sofia,” interrupted Stephen.” Are you saying there is a real fucking Federation and Vulcans with Romulans and you guys are for real?”

“ Just give us the parcel, “ implored the exasperated older Alien.

Stephen was emboldened now though and asked of the older Alien , “ ok Lieutenant where exactly are you from?”

The alien shrugged his shoulders ,” I am Lieutenant Branion from Betazoid..”

Stephen then smiled at the two, “ Ok guys we may give you the package but not now. We will meet tonight for dinner downstairs at 7pm and if you answer our questions honestly you can have the package ok? And don’t worry we will treat you for dinner..”

The chubby Alien was not happy.” we haven’t got time to waste. It Is vital we move quickly”

“Time is relative,” suggested Stephen.

“He is right,” suggested the younger Vulcan.” I am ensign Toreq by the way.”

“ And if you do work for the Temporal Agency, “ suggested Sofia. “It won’t matter.”

Stephen then offered his hand to Branion who shook his head and accepted it Toreq then held his hand out.

“ No Live long and Prosper thing?” queried Stephen holding his hand up in the classic Star Trek Vulcan greeting.

“ That’s just a Television thing,” shrugged Toreq awkwardly.

“ Ok you guys make like smoke and dis appear for now and we will see you downstairs at 7pm,” Suggested Stephen who then waited until their two new companions made their way to the stairwell. Stephen then swiftly opened the room door and he and Sofia entered. Inside they both stopped and looked at each other.

” What do you think?” asked Stephen of Sofia.

She shook her head ,” I don’t know. This is totally amazing…”

Stephen then lifted Sofiai up in his arms and swirled her around,” I told you this weekend would be an adventure.. Didn’t I ??”

She put her arms around Stephen and hugged him,” You did Stephen.”

Stephen gently let her back down. “ ok we pack up and go downstairs to reception and get a change of room. We will book it in your name and pay cash. I wouldn’t trust our Betazoid friend to not come back when we are out. It is eight thirty now so lets go for it Sofia. We always have to have a Plan B and even a Plan C or D just in case.”

Sofia nodded in agreement,” If this is not a hoax Stephen its amazing.”

“Well we are not chancing it so lets change rooms, right,” suggested Stephen.” It’s Time for Plan B, I think just in case.”

In a short time they had moved to a new room now on the 4th floor and this one was evidently a upgrade with a huge single king size bed a larger tv mounted on the wall and a well-stocked bar fridge. Stephen repacked everything away in the new safe and together the two of them made ready to go down to the convention. They left their room and took the elevator down to the ground floor and from there walked to the Excel Centre stadium where the convention was being held. It was nearly 9am and several thousand people were already in a huge queue snaking its way around one of the huge halls where it was being held. Probably nearly a quarter of the people in the queue were dressed up in some sort of Star Trek cosplay outfit and Stephen and Sofia paused to get pictures of the best which he could use for his article.

They then approached a help desk which was set apart from most of the tickets desks. A young man took the letter from Allan the editor and the one that had been sent by the organisers. They were both issued with plastic passes on a necklace and the young man passed them programmes and a map for the event and he marked an x with a pen where they should go for the interviews.

“ A member of staff will check you into where the green rooms are and you should get there 15 minutes early but do not be surprised if things run late,” he advised them. “ Otherwise these passes gets you into all the expos and all the theatre shows.”

Sofia asked could she book separate photo shoots and he told her auto graphs and selfies were on a queue only basis but she could go in now and book any photo shoots with the stars now before the doors opened but many were already booked. With that they both went in and headed to to the booth to book pictures. They both booked pictures with Trip the engineer from the enterprise and Patrick Stewart then Sofia also booked pictures with the actors who played Tuvac Tom Paris and Captain Janeway. The main doors opened but they managed to get a good look around before the place filled up too much. There were full Bridge mock ups of TOS enterprise the Next Gen Enterprise and the NX01 original Enterprise plus a Klingon bird of Prey and Stephen and Sofia managed to get pics of themselves in each in turn. They were both like kids in a toy factory and the events of that morning made it even more special and they both laughed and giggled like teenagers

“ How much of it is true do you think?” Stephen asked.

“We have to find out,” agreed Sofia.” Obviously not all. No Vulcan hand salute and he seemed quite emotional for a Vulcan.”

“ Wow I am here to do a story about Star Trek and this happens ,” Stephen chuckled.

“ The story of a lifetime, but I think we will have to keep it a secret,” suggested Sofia.

“Listen too I think we can have some help on the machine,” reasoned Stephen.” My nephew Stuart is doing his doctorate at Queens University in Belfast on Energy devices. He did nuclear Physics for his degree in England, he is a total genius but told me he was keen to explore the use of new battery designs and possible alternates to what we use today. He could tell us more about Obsidian than those two muppets, they hadn’t even heard of it. It was him who told me about Obsidian holding a charge and they were looking into various crystals and alternate materials for new types of batteries as he reckons it could be the future.”

“ You can’t tell him everything,” cautioned Sofia.

“ No worries he knows I am ex RAF and worked for Airbus Defence Industries I will just hint its secret stuff and he will go for it. It is exactly what he is studying… and he is really clever Sofia .. Perhaps nearly as clever as you.”

Sofia mockingly punched Stephen in the arm,” You are very clever too Stephen my engineer and writer… it must run in your family…”

Stephen then glanced at his watch and said,” time to go meet our favourite EMH Doctor.”

They quickly made their way to the other side of the arena where a staff only sign hung over a doorway that was flanked by two security guards and with a large reception desk beside it. Stephen introduced himself to the two girls at the desk and one scurried off to see if all was well. The girl came back and beckoned for Stephen and Sofia to follow her.

“ He is ok for pictures and likes to be called Bob… he is a real sweetie,” said the Girl as she led them down the corridor past many similar rooms probably being used for similar purposes.” Will give you half an hour and then come fetch you Ok?”

“That’s ace,” agreed Stephen whilst Sofia just nodded and smiled.

They were shown into the small room where Robert was sitting in a large comfy chair and they all shook hands exchanged names and then sat down opposite him. The interview went great and both Stephen spoke to the Actor about not only about his role in star Trek but also his other ones in the Stargate and Stargate Atlantis series and his many others. These included many other Sci Fi classics from Inner Space to total Recall and Small Soldiers to the Howling and more recently The Orville. It was a light hearted chat which Stephen recorded on his phone but went it very well. They Discussed Roberts many other interests including his love for British Sci fi such as Doctor Who and his love for opera which he had used in a few episodes of Voyager. Stephen discussed with him the convention scenes in the states compared to the Uk and the fact they had both been to MonsterPalooza a few years previously. Bob laughed when Stephen joked that along with Tom Baker and Matt Smith he was one of his favourite Doctors in of all time and space.

They also discussed how much Robert caused the Doctors role in Voyager to be stretched and changed as time went by and how his screen time and popularity grew. Robert was Magnanimous and generous about his co-stars and the all the people who worked on the show in front and behind the cameras. He happily posed for pictures with both Stephen and Sofia and they were all a bit dis appointed when the girl tapped on the door and told them their time was up,

“ Damn,” sighed Stephen.” I really enjoyed our Chat. “

Bob nodded enthusiastically and Stephen quickly asked, ”You visit the Uk usually a few times a year Bob is there any chance we could hook up for a real chat. Over lunch or a pint or even Dinner, it would be my shout, so my treat.”

Bob smiled then reached in his pocket and gave Stephen a card,” It’s my personnel email and work mobile… give me a shout I have had a blast too…”

Sofia then giggled and gave Bob a huge hug,” Thank you,” she cooed.

“ It was my pleasure,” replied Bob who then added.” Now Steve that email and number is for your use only keep it for you two Ok?”

Stephen nodded and went to shake the actors hand but Bob gave him a hug instead before the young receptionist guided them gently away. Stephen was well chuffed and after confirming they would be back at five too see Jeri Ryan he and Sofia went back out into the arena.

“ That was Ace,” he said enthusiastically to Nikita.

“He was such a nice man,” said Sofia.” And he liked you, he may give you a proper interview later in the year… you have a way Stephen.”

The two of them wandered around the Halls taking many selfies for themselves and pictures for Stephens article, They went into one of the three Theatres at the event for a chance to see the director and stars of Picard who were doing a Question and answer session. Patrick Stewart, Jeri Ryan, Brent Spiner and Jonathon Frakes and most of the Stars were there and it was a good fun session. None of the actors took themselves seriously and they all joked and seemed to enjoy themselves. During the Q and A session Stephen just listened but Sofia stood up and was picked by Johnathon Frakes who was running the Session. When he asked her name and where she was from. Sofia announced she was from St Petersburg in Russia and Johnathon Frakes demanded and she received a round of applause. Stephen laughed as Sofiaa looking very embarrassed receiving a standing ovation from everyone in the room including all the stars…

As she wiped what could have been tears from her eyes she asked ,” How emotional on a personal scale was it for you all to reunite again… and did you realise how emotional it was for us the fans too see this dream finally come true?”

Again Sofia was applauded for her question and it was the stars who led that applause and Stephen felt a surge of pride for his friend. Afterwards as they left the Auditorium Sofia hugged her Irish friend.

“ Not a bad day ,I suppose,” he joked.

Sofia pulled Stephens face closer and kissed him on the Cheek,” Thanks Stephen.”

They then went to one of the many food outlets and got something to eat and sat Sofia was looking at the many pictures she had taken that morning. Stephen excused himself to find the toilets and when he came back he looked triumphant.

“ Your looking very happy,” she observed.

Stephen sat down beside her and sipped from a juice carton. “ I also rang Stuart and he is as keen as mustard to see the diagrams and get hold of the Crystals. He said they have been testing various crystals already with interesting results and Obsidian was on their list but yet to be done. We will drop them off at his laboratory workshop at the University as soon as we get in and we will see him on Sunday. He knows he can’t share anything or copy anything on the internet but he is very excited about it.”

“What time will we get there?” asked Sofia.

“ Our flight gets in at eight thirty, “ reasoned Stephen.” We have a hire car booked and its only 15 minutes to the uni Lab from the City airport we will meet Stuart for Ten AM..We can see Stuart then head up to the North Antrim Coast. Its only 45 minutes drive to the Giants Causeway and Dunluce Castle is just a few minutes from there…everything is sorted Sofia.. Hotel everything, I promise you.”

Just then Stephen Looked up and chuckled loudly at two familiar figures who had walked up almost sheepishly to a their table.

“ Tweedle Dumb and Tweedle Dee… pull up a seat Guys and join us Please,” he said happily.

Sofia looked up “ Toreq and Branian really please do join us?”

Toreq looked enthusiastic but Branion less so.

Stephen smiled at them ,” Come on guys are you Hungry? Have a bite too eat..”

Branion sat down but looked guilty, “ I am not sure how it works here.”

“Are you hungry?” asked Sofia.” Do you understand about buying Lunch?”

Toreq nodded,” I have read and watched films but we do not have this local currency, and have never used it.”

Stephen smiled and pulled his wallet out he then gave Sofia a hundred pounds in various notes and whispered to her ,” It’s their money ..sshh . .. Take the young one up show him the score and butter him up, keep him happy and on our side.”

He then smiled at the two newcomers and said ,” Toreq go with Sofia she will show you what to do and you can even keep the change.”

Branian looked up,” We are Vegetarian remember..?”

Stephen chuckled, “So is Sofia Branion and I am mostly vegetarian too.”

He then winked at the Chubby alien and added,” I only eat alien meat these days.”

As Sofia and Toreq wandered off Stephen smiled again at the Chubby Betazoid,” this must be interesting for you and the fact that no one is bothered how you look is good.”

Branion shrugged, “ I must confess I am a navigator and ships pilot by profession and being in such an environment as this, however benign this appears to be it feels uncomfortable too me.”

“ So your not a field agent,” concluded Stephen.

“We are all field agents,” reasoned Branian absentmindedly .” However we all specialise in our own areas of expertise.”

“So Toreq, his field is?”

“Toreq is a science and engineering ensign, But he is fascinated by early human and federation history and somewhat of an expert on it, So that’s why he is here,” observed Branion.

“So don’t you have specialist undercover infiltration experts as well?” asked Stephen.” I mean you guys are nice but…”

Branion nodded ,” there were 4 of us our Commander Walker was a human and Lieutenant Treya was our security officer ..they would normally fulfil these roles. Unfortunately we lost Treya to the MelKorne earlier on and Captain walker was determined to avenge her and find out the truth and any weaknesses of the Melkorne. He came back to this era to investigate the theft of the crystal shards the Melkorne seem to be seeking out .. He believed he had found it but they were on to him. So he sent the package here to this event in this place so we could easily pick it up and take it home to get it deciphered. He knew we could easily be seen at this event and not arouse suspicion then we might find out if they have a weakness…This use of this crystalline technology is new to us and quite different. My worry is the Melkorne may yet detect our presence here and the longer we are here on the Planet the more chance there is they might intercept us.”

Stephen sighed,” Look Branion I am beginning to believe you..”

Just as he said that Sofia and Toreq returned each carrying a Tray of sandwiches with fruit and rolls which they sat down at the table, Stephen showed them how to open the Fruit juice cartons and how to insert the Straws. Sofia explained to Toreq more about the money and how not too get ripped off when buying goods or food then gave him the change.

“ Remember I showed you how to read the prices and how to check them, then how to carefully count the money and generally add on 10% as a tip,” she said.

Toreq looked very happy for a Vulcan.. “ No this is amazing and I understand,”

“Now guys I reckon we are in no danger in here,” reasoned Stephen.” but me and Sofia are actually working here today I am working for a magazine…”

“ Your Timeline did not say that,” Said Toreq as he munched on a Sandwich.” It said you were a engineer not a reporter.”

“ Well your timelines aren’t that great…first the hospital mistake and now this,” chuckled Stephen.” I do both engineering and reporting.”

Branian looked visibly shocked,” You cannot report this Stephen..Really you cannot.”

Stephen held his hands up in a sign of defence,” No worries guys I understand your Temporal Prime thingy…”

“Directive ..” added Sofia.

“ Exactly,” agreed Toreq.

“ I promise In fact I pinky swear,” said Stephen.” I think we are all on the same side.”

Stephen then stood up and turned toSofia,” we have work to do.” He then looked at Toreq and Branian and smiling said,” You chaps should stay out of trouble and use this opportunity to quietly observe and enjoy 21st century mankind. We will see you in the main restaurant at 7pm local time. I have a table for four booked in our name Mister Branion and remember you pronounce it Mccloughlin, we will see you both then.”

Sofia stood up and smiled at their two companions,” yes we will see you both later .Please take care and stay out of trouble…enjoy yourselves.”

Toreq looked happy enough but Branion shook his head,” We should go to your new room and get the parcel now…waiting is a mistake I feel.”

“Sorry we have work to do. we will see you later Folks,” said Stephen who took Sofia by the hand and they walked away.

“ They knew we had moved rooms,” hissed Sofia softly when they were a safe distance away from their new friends. ”So they must have returned to our first room after we left…they must have got in and saw we left.”

“Which is why they sought us out in the hope we would lead them back to our new room and that’swhat they are after,” reasoned Stephen.

“Should we just give them the case?” asked Sofia.” I mean I feel they aren’t bad men or evil alien creatures Stephen.”

Stephen nodded,” I tend to agree with you honey but I think if we do hand it over it should be in a public place, not in our room…I say we get as much information from them as we can over the meal then we both discuss it… you and me together will decide what to do. Then if we do, we hand it over in say reception…in public. Remember they could be lying and they let it slip they checked out our first room after agreeing to leave us alone until tonight.”

“ So What Now?” asked Sofia.

Stephen handed her the official programme,” In the theatre soon there is a Combined guest panel for the Strange New Worlds Series and Discovery. We can’t miss that for a couple of real Aliens from the Federation Temporal Agency. Can We?”

They both giggled at the absurdity of the whole set up and everything that happened to them that day and hugged each other.

“ OK lets do it,” chuckled Sofia.

The two attended the theatre show and enjoyed it greatly but Stephen found his mind always wandering back to this new and amazing situation they found themselves in. After that ended they went together and queued so Sofia could get autographs and selfies with various of the actors. Stephen happily handed over the cash needed to pay as the selfies were usually extra.

“Well its not our money so our new friends are paying for it,” he mused to his companion. They had also booked professional photo shoots with more actors and the queues were quite long. They both met with Connor Trinner who had played Trip the engineer on the Enterprise series and each had their pictures with him . Stephen said he had also loved Connor in his roles in the Stargate Atlantis and Stargate Origins series and that went down well with the friendly actor. After that they both joined the line to meet Patrick Stewart and were chuffed when the actor recognised Sofia from earlier, Stephen also mentioned he had been a fan since watching him in I Claudius and the movie Excalibur. After that Stephen joined more queues with Nikita as she wanted to get pictures with various actors from the Voyager TV series including the actors who had played Tuvac Tom Paris and of course the famous Captain Janeway herself.

By the time it was done it was gone four thirty so they headed back to the access point for the green room area and booked their slot too meet with Jeri Ryan a la Seven Of Nine. The same girl as before led them down the corridor to a different room.

“ Ok she is here to promote Picard so no personnel questions and she doesn’t want to talk about any early problems from her early years of Voyager. Some reporter annoyed her earlier by going on and on about that..ok,” she advised them.

Stephen nodded enthusiastically,” we fully understand no problems, I promise.”

“I am just letting you know,” cautioned the girl.

They were then led into a room and there was Jeri who rose too greet them in a very friendly manner, Stephen noted a minder was also sat in the room just behind where his and Sofia’s seats were. The girl asked Jeri if she needed anything and Jeri nodded and requested more bottles of water all round. When they all sat down Stephen introduced him and Sofia and told Jeri he had met her a few years before at a convention in Birmingham England and he had told Jeri then that she and the Doctor, Robert were his favourite characters and actors from the Show. Jeri then chuckled that she remembered it and she pointed out she had hugged him and Stephen went bright red. They all laughed and Sofia Said they had met Robert earlier that day and he had been great and Jeri seemed genuinely delighted. The interview went more like a friendly chat and Stephen asked Jeri about a great picture on the net showing her on the London Underground Tube Network standing in front of a huge advertising poster of Jeri as Seven in Picard. Jeri roared with genuine laughter and after that relaxed totally and it was sadly all too soon their time was up. Again Jeri hugged them both and they were sadly led away.

“That was brilliant ,” laughed Sofia. ”She was just so nice..”

She then pinched Stephen on the arm and added,” You were great too Stephen you have a gift chatting to people and making them comfortable.”

“ Gift of the Gab,” joked Stephen. ”It used to get me in trouble in school back in the day.”

He then nudged Sofia ,” You were ace too ..she liked you and we make a good team. I think you’re a keeper and I shouldn’t let you go.”

She smiled and checked her watch,” Its nearly six. What should we do next?”

Stephen checked the Programme,” Ok in theatre one there is a lecture on Special effects in theatre two there is a auction for props… or we could do a once over in the Prop museum and a last look about the dealers merchandise stalls before we head back…”

“Agreed ,” nodded Sofia happily.

“ Glad you came?” asked Stephen.

She hugged him,” Stephen this is the best adventure ever..”

Stephen quickly kissed her forehead, “ It’s only just beginning…honey .”

“We have half a million dollars to spend so to hell with it, lets buy some goodies before its over.. anything you want honey,” he laughed and suggested happily.

They both laughed and went on their way first to the Star Trek museum that had been set up in a corner of the arena then to the retail area where tons of merchandise in hundreds of dealers stalls was for sale. Stephen encouraged Sofia to buy anything she liked and they both bought a selection of t Shirts, Sofia a Enterprise tv series crew jacket several books a model for Stephen and a simulated scanner and tricorder each for them both. Sofia also bought a genuine phasor pistol prop that was on sale from the Enterprise TV show on one stall it was over £700 pound alone. It came with certificates and pictures to show it was genuine and the two friends were well chuffed with everything they had got.

“ Ok are we done?” asked Stephen.” I will change more of the money into pounds later but we should head up to our room and dump this stuff off.”

She had now several bags in each hand and nodded,” Yes I want to change before we go to Dinner with our friends but it has been a great day Stephen.”

She then stood up straight and kissed Stephen on the cheek,” Thank you for getting me to finally come over.”

Stephen smiled back,” One of the best days of my life…ever”

“Let’s go then…” giggled Sofia and they headed out of the Star Trek Convention….

Chapter Three.

They both headed up to their new room and Sofia looked in the new bathroom and called out to Stephen, ”We have Nice Fluffy posh bathrobes here, oh and the towels in this room are a lot bigger and thicker too…”

Stephen then went in his bag and got out a black shirt to replace his Star Trek Discovery T shirt he had worn that day and then turned on the Television and announced,” Yeah and we have a load more channels and the tv screen is huge too.”

Sofia came back in the room and unzipped her bag picked out a selection of new clothes too wear for the evening then disappeared back into the bathroom .About twenty minutes later she emerged showered and had changed into a pretty light pink dress that came down to just above her knees. Stephen wolf whistled and she ignored him then sat at the dressing table and started to apply eye liner and make up. Stephen quickly skipped into the bathroom showered shaved and brushed his teeth then came back in the room in the new bathrobe. He selected fresh socks boxers some beige cargo trousers and his Black shirt. He then pulled his favourite Black desert boots back on and asked Sofia.

“ How is this? Will I do?”

She smiled and slowly looked him up and down and then said in a fake Vulcan accent,” You are presentable and acceptable.”

Sofia then reached down and put on some lovely sandals and Stephen sighed,” You look ace.” Stephen went back into the bathroom to get his after shave. He could hear the TV in the background and assumed Sofia was playing with the sound as he heard a melodic whispering tone that lasted a good few seconds. After spraying the after shave and checking himself out in the mirror he heard a audible gasp..

“ Stephen…. Can you come here?” asked Sofia in a most awkward stilted voice . He felt all the hairs on his neck stand up and he knew instantly she sounded worried. He put the after shave sprayer in his trouser pocket and smiling broadly holding his arms outstretched to show his hands were empty he walked back into the main room. Sure enough there was Toreq and Branion stood in the middle of the room dressed as before but Toreq was carrying a shoulder bag and Branion seemed to be holding a sort of pistol whish he was swivelling between Sofia and Stephen.

“Say guys I said 7pm downstairs, but if you want there are drinks in the fridge,” said Stephen innocently as he studied the two men .

“Just give us the information Tablet,” said Branion.” There is no need for any trouble and we can be on our way.”

“ How did you find our room?” asked Sofia.

Toreq looked embarrassed,” I scanned you both earlier as we ate our meal then we used our ships sensors to locate and map your new room..”

“ And beamed in,” observed Sofia.

“Transported,” corrected Branion.” Now can you give me the Tablet Device.”

As if too emphasis this he pointed the pistol at Stephen in a more threatening manner before advising, “now please Stephen co operate with us!”

Stephen deliberately smiled broadly and nodded and then he pointed to the cupboard by the bed,” It’s in the safe just there Branion, stay calm and you can have it.”

“Go on then and get it ,” urged the portly Alien.

Stephen quicky walked around the bed winking at Sofia as he past, then kneeling he opened the cupboard door and entered the four digit code in the safe and watched as it clicked open. He then took out the plastic pouch containing the Obsidian Crystal Shards and the various newspaper clippings which he put on the bed. Then he reached in and lifted out the Stiff plastic case that contained the tablet and stood up holding it in his left hand whilst at the same time slipping the after spray from his pocket into his right hand. He spun around holding the tablet up keeping his right hand down and facing away.

He walked towards Branion smiling broadly and was pleased to see Toreq who didn’t seem to have a pistol backed away.

“ See no worries, “said Stephen in his most comforting friendly way.

Branion pointed to the coffee table with his hand. ”Put it down there and back off.”

However Stephen stepped forward towards Branion holding out the tablet in his left hand then he appeared to stumble by the coffee table and held the tablet out for Branion to catch. Branion yelped lowered the pistol and grabbed for the tablet with his right hand.

“ Sorry have you got it?” asked Stephen innocently as he quickly stepped forward and sprayed Branion in the eyes with the after shave that he held in his right hand. Branion yelped in agony and dropped the tablet on the floor as he tried to rub his eyes with his free hand. Stephen dropped his after shave then Grabbed Branions right hand with the pistol in it with both his hands and swiftly twisted it very sharply. Branion yelped again and Stephen wrenched the pistol free and held it as he then sidestepped and twisting around he kicked Brannion in the stomach sending him flying backwards and colliding into Toreq. Branion was now on the floor rubbing his eyes and gasping for breath whist Toreq was vainly trying to help him up .Stephen then deftly stepped forward and put the pistol under Toreqs chin which caused the slim Vulcan to freeze.. then with his other hand Stephen relieved Toreq of his shoulder bag and passed it to Sofia. All this had happened very swiftly in perhaps less than a few seconds.

Stephen the checked Toreqs jacket pockets and lifted out two small devices and casually chucked them on the bed behind them, then using the pistol firmly held under Toreqs chin he guided him back to an armchair.

“ Now sit down my friend ,” he send calmly. ”But keep you arms clasped behind your head.”

Stephen then turned to the still gasping Branion and half helped, half dragged him into the other armchair next to Toreq.

Sofiai can you soak a face cloth with cold water in the bathroom and give it too our friend here to clean and rinse his eyes?\* Asked Stephen calmly. ”Look you will be ok just don’t rub it in…keep blinking you will be fine.”

“There was absolutely no need for that,” wailed Branion miserably .” You wretched humans are all animals.”

“You guys broke into our room and threatened us with weapons” reasoned Stephen gently.

“Animals,” wailed Branion.

“ He has a point…” said Toreq.”I did say not to…”

“Shut up Ensign!” wailed Branion who then snatched the wet facecloth Sofia handed him and began to furiously wipe his eyes

“ So let’s just calm down,” said Stephen gently who then sat down on the Sofa at the bottom of the bed and opposite their two unexpected guests. He then nodded to Sofia towards the bed and Toreqs bag and the two devices Stephen had removed. She quickly grabbed them, sat down beside Stephen and began to look at the devices. Branion was breathing normally now and had stopped rubbing his eyes though he was blinking and his eyes were still running profusely. There was a box of tissues on the coffee table and Stephen reached forward picked them up and gently tossed them to Branion. Stephen sat back and visibly relaxed but he kept the pistol covering their guests then he smiled at Toreq.” Ok you can bring your hands down but keep them visible my friend . So how about you answer my questions truthfully and if you do you can have what you want…but no bullshit.”

Sofia could see their guests didn’t understand,” No lies. only the truth.”

Toreq smiled and nodded and both Sofia and Stephen looked at Branion who then slowly nodded ,” Yes…I understand.”

“Ok from the beginning,” stated Stephen. ”Tell me about you the temporal Agency and the Melkorne in that order.

“ I am from the 29th century as you would call it,” stated Branion resignedly.” I am a full time Agent As was Commander Walker and Lieutenant Treya who was from Bajor. Ensign Toreq is from your 24th century and was recruited for past missions due to his scientific abilities and his interest in past human and federation history.”

“So you don’t have to be all from the 29th Century?” asked Sofia.

“The temporal agency recruits specialists from all along the timeline,” said Toreq.”When this mission ends I will be returned to my quarters on Deep Space 10 and normal duties until I am needed again.”

“ As yet we haven’t needed to recruit anyone earlier than the 23 rd century,” observed Branion.” There is always the doubt people from any earlier in the timeline might not be able to adapt and comprehend the needs of the Agency. There has been many cases of personnel suffering breakdowns due to the stresses of time travel…it is a constant worry.”

“So where did the Melkorne fit in to this?” asked Sofia.

“ The agency became aware timelines were being endangered due to time incursions recently,” replied Branion.”Initial suspicions were a faction of Sulibans might be involved. However the energy signature that was detected did not fit any known parameters. They seemed to be intent on stealing certain technologies and stealing ships to explore certain systems. Again these were technologies inferior to the Suliban but they were still becoming a increasing danger to the timelines. They also seemed to be using Terrans or humans as you say from earth as their foot soldiers. Some time ago we intercepted a stolen freighter that was being used to scan the volcanic moons of the Rena 5 system in the 23rd century. The ship after a fire fight was disabled but they set off a warp core overload rather than surrender. We managed to transport 2 survivors from the ship but both were severely burned and eradiated. One died but only after vowing his gods would destroy us in vengeance, He said his gods were of the Melkorne and they came from their own universe where they ruled Supreme.

The second survivor was not so enamoured with his gods and said he was a slave and his people were stolen from the earth long ago and the Melkorne used them as slaves as soldiers as food and even as vessels so the Melkorne could exist on this plain. He said his Gods were seeking the crystals they needed but he died of his radiation burns before we could learn more. The agency detected more incursions and the signatures seemed to emanate from this planet and this century mostly from around the 2050s after the cessation of the planet wars when the earth had plunged into chaos…”

“What wars?” asked Stephen.

“By the late 2040s Earth was in crisis cyber terrorists has repeatedly crippled the internet triggering a world economic crisis but a series of wars also broke out over resources,” Said Toreq.

“Was it oil?” asked Nikita.

“No water and food supplies in Africa Asia and south America triggered a series of conflicts. However the old major powers were affected too the United States crippled by the economic downturn had a hung election when three candidates stood. This degenerated into mass rioting The Europian Union was also in crisis as it fragmented with many members states left, the drop in oil prices also crippled the middle east and Russia. China badly hit by the economic crisis began a series of border conflicts with its neighbours after initial success this back fired. After several embarrassing defeats the Chinese Peoples liberation Army led a coup against the Leadership in Bejing. However several regions rejected this military Take over and effectively broke away in a internal civil war,” continued Toreq.” Your world was in turmoil..”

“In the United States following a near total economic collapse and rioting a state of emergency was declared and all funding for The UN was cut as was all foreign aide with most police forces being privatised too save money. This meant the growth of mega corporations who stepped in and ran their privately owned Police forces in many states, these became almost private armies with only nominal control from the now very weak central government. This only infuriated many protesters …it was the perfect Storm and crisis.”

“ So a good time and place for these time meddlers..the Melkorne too hang out and be able to operate,” reasoned Sofia.

“ Exactly,” stated Branion. “ We managed to trace most of the Time incursions coming from the Los Angeles area around 2051 at the height of the crisis.”

“Could not the Melkorne not be helping create the crisis too aide their ability to operate better in that time period?” asked Stephen.

Branion looked at Toreq who shrugged his shoulders and then nodded,” That could indeed be a possibility we had not thought off…”

“ So if we give you the Tablet what will you do?” asked Sofia.

“Take it back to the federation experts to de cipher it,” replied Branion.

“ Which could take time,” admitted Toreq who then almost sadly added.” Also we will probably be de assigned and a new team appointed.”

Branion nodded,” It is customary to do so after all we have lost two senior team members.”

“ I thought you were worried about wasting time? “ queried Stephen.

“How long will it take your experts to decipher the texts?” asked Sofia.

Branion shrugged,” These are dead Earth languages there are no federation experts in them so it will be a struggle. So all the more important we take the tablet back quickly..”

Stephen shook his head ,” Wait guys Sofia here is an expert in languages and has already started to decipher them and very accurately too…”

Sofia blushed but nodded, ”Well I am willing too help.”

“ Also we can help with the use of crystal technology,” suggested Stephen.” It is as new to you as it is too us but we have already worked out they are being used as super capacitors as part of A Cosmic Time Portal and tomorrow we are going to see an expert on them to see if we can unlock the secrets. We have already worked out the Obsidian is being used to absorb energy store transform and magnify it, we are ahead of you guys and we could help you.”

“ You cannot tell anyone of this .” wailed Branion.

Stephen smiled back,” don’t worry he is family.”

“ The Temporal Agency would never allow it,” muttered Branion who was still obviously horrified by the thought of it.

“ If we go back now and give the Agency the tablet we will be reassigned,” reasoned Toreq. ” All our efforts might have been for nothing and you said yourself the science division is very slow. They could be too late.”

“ So don’t tell them,” suggested Sofia.” Let us help you at least to translate the tablet and investigate the use of these Crystals then it’s up to you.”

Stephen nodded,” You got us involved in this. You came into our room pointing a phasor at us and yet we are offering too help.”

Stephen then reached down to the floor and picked up the tablet in its case and offered it again to Branion who looked decidedly wary.

“ Go on take it,” repeated Stephen who looked at Sof1a who nodded enthusiastically.

Branion looked to Toreq who also nodded, then he got up from the chair and meekly accepted the tablet before sitting back on the armchair and handing it to Toreq who gleefully accepted it. As Toreq quickly took the tablet out of its case and examined it Branion looked almost apologetically at Sofia and Stephen.

“ Perhaps we underestimated the moral virtues of humans in this time,” he said softly.

“ And their abilities,” added Toreq who was studying the texts on the tablet.

“ So you can go back to your timeship,” suggested Stephen. “ Let us do our own investigations, we can stay in touch. ”

Almost absentmindedly Toreq nodded in agreement,” I can easily synch our communicators with their human devices..”

“ Mobile phones,” suggested Sofia.

“ Won’t you need the Tablet to show your expert ?” asked Branion.

Stephen chuckled,” No worries we made a copy.”

Branion shook his head in despair,” I cannot believe this is happening. I have served in the federation for twenty years and nearly eight I the Temporal Agency. This goes against everything we were taught…everything.”

Stephen smiled at the Portly alien, “ You have to learn to improvise and adapt my friends.” Toreq nodded ,” Captain Walker said something similar if I remember.”

Sofia then replaced all the devices back in the shoulder bag and offered it back to Branion who accepted it.

“ So do we have a deal?” asked Stephen. “ Are we a team?”

Toreq looked at Branion who sighed in resignation. “ Yes you may help us for now.”

Stephen smiled at Sofiaa and clapped his hands in delight,” Ok I suggest Dinner then folks. I am buying. Then after you can have your phasor back and transport up to your ship..agreed?”

“ I am rather hungry,” conceded Branion. Toreq who was putting the Tablet into his shoulder bag also nodded in agreement.

“I am famished,” he said.

“ Great,” exclaimed Stephen.” Then over dinner you can explain to us how a human TV Science fiction series that started in the 1960’s is actually based on the truth…”

An hour later the four of them sat at a table in the hotels main restaurant enjoying a meal and trying to relax. Stephen who was being the host checked everyone was happy with their meal and was happy everyone was he started to chat.

“ So come on guys?” he asked.” We are all friends now so please tell me the truth behind the TV Star Trek and the real Federation?”

Toreq looked to Branion who then put down his knife and fork and after sipping some water began,” You have to be aware it is sadly one of my own people who were responsible.”

“ You may be aware many females of our species on Betazoid are empaths and can detect peoples feelings and sense their intent, however perhaps 10% of our males are true telepaths and can read peoples thoughts and in some cases plant thoughts and ideas in others minds. This gift though comes with a great risk and many telepaths are driven insane by being constantly bombarded with other peoples thoughts. Many years ago in the early days of the Temporal Agency a Betazoid researcher Doctor Vangoolan was fascinated by human history and used his timeship to go back and study human history extensively. The agency was not aware of what he was up to but it seems he was fascinated by your planets entertainment Radio and television broadcasts.

He wondered if he could exert a benign influence on human progress by using his abilities to to suggest a positive human attitude to space exploration the possibility of extra-terrestrial life and advancing their civilisation…”

“ it was the early days,” interjected Toreq.” Before the time wars or the Temporal Accords had even been thought off.”

“Quite ,” agreed Branion.” He saw a pilot of a proposed Show by a Gene Roddenberry which he liked and then he went back and deliberately planted fresh seeds in the mind of Roddenberry and his writers making the pilot more suitable. He didn’t stop there and carried on influencing writers on the many series and spin offs all unbeknown to the Temporal Agency. Of course many things are not all completely accurate but much was..”

“ So was there a Captain Kirk and a Starship Enterprise?” asked Sofia who could barely conceal her glee at the very thought of it.

Branion nodded ,” Yes and Kirk existed and many modern historians regard him now as like a twenty second century privateer almost who broke many of the temporal accords and for a time he did command a ship called the Enterprise.”

“ To many he was a famous explorer and hero,” put in Toreq softly.

Branion nodded in agreemnent,” yes I concede he is still popular with the uneducated masses on some of our worlds.”

“ The Vulcans are meant to be emotionless,” queried Sofia nervously.” Is that true?”

Toreq smiled,” My people do have a philosophy to control their emotions but that is primarily aimed at negative emotions or any emotion that can lead a person away from a logical path. We still can express happiness love and humour but try and supress Anger, Fear, Jealousy, Lust Greed and any of the more negative ones..”

“ Vulcan humour exists,” agreed Branion.”It just takes some getting used to.”

“So the Borg , the Cardassions all exist?” asked Stephen.

Branion nodded, ”oh yes though your series exaggerated their abilities.”

“ So what happened to him, your Doctor?” asked Sofia.

“ Its believed Doctor Vangoolan was suffering from all the effects of so many time jumps and trying to follow all the time lines whilst influencing all these minds. It is believed it got all too much for him and he suffered a breakdown which is not uncommon for temporal agents who get too close to their cases. He tried to influence other TV shows elsewhere on your planet to a limited degree. In Europe he influenced the creators of a time travel show which we think was based on his rational behind the Temporal Agency and how he disagreed with its non-interference guidelines.”

“Wow it’s got to be Doctor Who,” reasoned Stephen gleefully.

Brannion nodded and Toreq smiled,” I love it too ,” added the Vulcan.

“ So was that true? Any of it? Like the Daleks or the Cybermen?”asked Stephen with a certain amount of excitment in his voice.

Brannion chewed on some food, ”We think he based the Doctor on himself and his belief that we should benignly interfere too help people, the Time lords were of course the Temporal Agency with its non-interference rules….The Cybermen where the Borg ..Oh and the Daleks are very real but luckily they exist in a mirror universe far beyond the Gamma quadrant , the Temporal agency though always tries to monitor them.”

“The Stargate series also,” suggested Toreq.

Brannion nodded,” Yes the Canadian show we believe he had a hand in that too but his interference was revealed soon after .”and he was removed from the Agency programme. Of course by then these programmes were out and we could do nothing about them.. they were intergrated fully in the human timeline. Many believed no real harm was done and a few proponents of the Doctor Vangaloon support his benign interference theory. However most now know the potential for disaster if you interfere with a time line can be dangerous and destructive no matter how good your intentions might be. Hence our Disdain for Kirk and Janeway…”

“ So Voyager was based on a true story?” asked Sofia.

“An exaggerated story,” said Branion.” That woman on more than one occasion broke every law we hold dear just so she could save her precious ship and her crew.”

“ So there are other mirror universes?” asked Sofia.

“There are both mirror universes of our own one each one created when a timeline jumps ,” stated Toreq.” As well as a infinite number of other parallel universes. Occasionally a rift or tear can open connecting two or more of these universes we know that. Most of these rifts, tears or spacial anomalies do not last long and can usually be random to where and when they connect. If these Melkorne have a permanent rift that allows them access to our universe and times and control it we must find it and shut it down before they can do real damage.”

“ It could be linked to a Black Hole, a wormhole, a White hole a sub space rift or some other new and dangerous phenomenon,” mused Branion who seemed content now.” We have ways too close it if we can pinpoint it.”

“ How might you do That?” asked Sofia.

“ We carry a number of Quantum photon torpedoes any one of which has been shown to be enough to seal a black hole or collapseany wormhole,” stated Branion.

“ They will destroy the phenomenon and any device using it then?” queried Sofia.

“If not the planet or ship that is using it,” observed Toreq.

“ If you play with time you can get your fingers burned,” observed Stephen.

“We know these Melkorne do not value any lifeform or than their own and have murdered many sentient beings on many worlds and according and to one of their own men enslaved thousands. Do not pity them,” cautioned Branion.

Soon after that the meal ended and Stephen and Sofia bid farewell to their two new companions and returned to their room. When they did they both dailed 010 on their phones and found they could both speak to and see Toreq on his timeship. Then they both lay back on the bed and chilled out.

“ I took pictures of my notes and sent them to Toreq with the translations,” said Sofia.” It might help him.”

“ What a truly amazing day,” sighed Stephen.” We have got to get up early tomorrow back to Gatwick nice and early. “Our flight s at eight we gotta be up and outa here by 6am .. so I will set the alarm for 5am. “

“ My bag is already packed , “ said Sofia.” what I am wearing tomorrow is on the chair.”

“Aren’t you just perfect,” teased Stephen.

Sofia rolled ono her side facing Stephen and smiled,” I have high expectations mister Engineer…and I expect you too live up to them.”

Stephen rolled onto his side facing her, “How am I doing so far?”

“ Not bad so far,” she sighed and smiled. Stephen then leant in and kissed her.. A soft lingering gentle kiss and perhaps their first real kiss ever . Their tongues gently touched and explored each other savouring each others taste…Sofia eventually broke of this first contact and smiled.

“Steady tiger,” she said.” You cannot rush me.”

“You know how I feel,” said Stephen softly.

Sofiaa smiled at him,” I know Stephen and I do care for you.”

Stephen chuckled, “I introduced you to several Star Trek actors fought off aliens and helped you find the true secrets behind our favourite Science Fiction shows, not bad for a first date.”

“ I never said it was a date,” teased Sofia who then got up and grabbed her large t shirt and padded into the bathroom. Stephen got undressed as he heard her brush her teeth when she emerged wearing the shirt he took her place. He came back in and climbed into the bed and Sofia snuggled into him.

“ You know the score I snuggle into your back,” she said softly.

He gently raised her hand and kissed it, then leaning over he flicked the bedside light off. He started to mull over the amazing events of the day.. Aliens Sci fi… Star Trek Actors Doctor Who and Alien spaceships and as he did so he drifted off to sleep….

Chapter four

Stephen opened his eyes with a start when he realised Sofia was squeezing his shoulder then he quickly sat up in the bed.

“Time to get up sleepy head,” joked Sofia who Stephen noticed was of course already up washed and dressed. He yawned and quickly swung himself out of the bed and padded around to the bathroom and dumping his boxers he jumped in the Shower. Once done he quickly brushed his teeth and shaved and going back in the room he quickly dressed in Black jeans Dark Tshirt his black leather motorcycle jacket and his beloved black Desert boots. It only took another ten minutes and they were ready to go. Stephen had cut open the packets with the money and split it up further into now ten smaller pads and packed them into both their cases and both their shoulder bags and some in his wallet and Sofia’s purse. They both then grabbed their luggage and after a final check left the room at just gone 0520am and headed down stairs.

Leaving their door access cards at reception they headed out of the complex and walked towards the Tube station. At that time of morning London seemed quiet and deserted and they quickly boarded the tube for London Bridge. Once there they only waited a few minutes to swap and catch the Thameslink Gatwick express for the airport. On his phone Stephen checked the plane time tables and the weather forecast for northern Ireland.

“Everything is good,” He confirmed to Sopia. ”Planes are good and on time and It says sunny all weekend for us in lovely Belfast and the North Antrim coast.”

“and this is your airline we are flying on?” queried Sofia.” So if it breaks in any way you can fix it.”

“No negative thoughts,” chuckled Stephen.

“So did you get Free tickets?” she enquired.

“ No but we got them cheaper and free quicker boarding and free luggage and choice of seats. Nothing is ever completely free these days honey,” he replied.

“ So do you think we can trust our two friends ?” he asked Sofia.

She sighed ,” I think so. I mean they let us keep the 3 Obsidian crystals. I get the feeling they are good guys. I mean you showed they are not exactly trained ninja assassins when you disarmed them in a few seconds.”

“ Years of training made that look easy,” joked Stephen.” Yes I think they are ok. Well I hope they are and I guess we will find out.”

Stephen then reached into his shoulder bag and produced two folded sheets of paper one of which he handed to Sofia,” Your boarding pass keep it and your passport handy you use the barcode on the boarding pass to get access to departures and through security. Bin any liquids we can easily buy more after shave and smellies once we are through departures and security , plus we are back in the North Terminal again. Put any loose stuff including your purse in your shoulder bag it is easier to get through security love trust me I do this every day.” Sofiaa who was wearing purple Slacks and a cream top checked her jacket pockets and took Stephens advice. At just gone 6 am they arrived at Gatwick and made their way to the North terminal Stephen steered them expertly through the crowds to the departures entrance and they made quick progress through the security and into departures lounge.

Checking which gate they were at Stephen and Sofia headed up to the designated one and in a few minutes they were called forward too board.  
 “ I have Texted our Stuart to get the address and postcode where his lab is,” he said. ”They have bits of the Uni all over Belfast these days I remember him saying they were moving into a new building and it was well off the main Uni site.”

“ Your from there will you know your way around?” asked Sofia.

Stephen shrugged,” They keep rerouting the bloody roads around Belfast, it changes every time I visit home anyway that’s why I asked for a hire car with sat nav and I asked Stuart to give us his postcode. Never take no chances Sofia that’s my moto.”

They were then called too board their plane and Stephen led the way and Sofia noticed they were sat at the very front of the plane. Stephen put their Cabin Trolley bags in the overhead locker and they sat down with Sofia having the window seat.

“ I booked these seats so we are first off,” said Stephen who then checked his phone as it had beeped. He checked it and smiled,” That is handy Stuarts Lab is just around the corner from the City airport in the Titanic Quarter and he has given me the code to get in the car park. It’s just ..almost opposite the Titanic Studios where they made Game of Thrones and he says he will put the kettle on when we get there…”

“ How Quaint,” observed Sofia.

“An old Northern Irish tradition,” chuckled Stephen.” First thing you offer any guest or stranger is a cup of tea.”

They were in luck as no one was sat in the seat next to them and Stephen could relax as the flight crew carried out their pre-departure cabin checks. All too soon the door were shut and the crew did their safety displays and the aircraft was pushed back and then as its engines started it Taxied forward..

The two giggled and swapped tales as the flight from Gatwick took less than an hour and the aircraft soon began its descent into Belfast City airport or the George Best airport as it was now called. The two of them waited until the aircraft came to a rest and then collected their bags from the overhead locker. Inside a minute the steps were on the aircraft and the doors opened and Stephen guided Sofia out into the sunny morning at Belfast’s city airport. As they went down the steps Stephen and Sofia were both startled as a waiting man called out in a friendly tone to them.

“ Stevie Mac as I live and Breath?!” announced a Waiting Worker dressed in a dark uniform.” What are you doing home? I thought we had seen the back of you..”

Stephen roared with laughter as he recognised an old friend,” Paul mate are you back on Shift today?”

Paul nodded and laughed,” Me and Martin both like the old days. How are yah?”

As Steve reached his friend at the bottom of the steps the two hugged and Stephen nodded to Sofia,” This is Paul an Engineer here In Belfast and we go way back.”

“We bloody do,” laughed Paul smiling back at her..

“A problem?” queried Stephen.

Paul shook his head, ”Its on the deck parked for two hours so I am doing a nav data update now as it will save us work tonight. How long are you over mate?”

Stephen Shrugged,” only till Monday mate…gotta see family.”

Paul nodded ,” No worries, we will go for a bevvy another time.” Stephen then smiled and said ,” Give my regards to Martin mate.”

Paul nodded ,” I will, now get going and have fun mate.”

Stephen then smiled at Sofia and they carried on towards the Terminal.

“ Your friend, How long have you known him?” she asked.

Stephen chuckled as he also said hello to a waiting security guard,” Its Belfast everyone knows everyone here honey.”

He saw the doubt in her eyes and smiled broadly,” Naw I worked with Paul and Martin before years ago and beside we all worked in the Aircraft factory Shorts which is next door to this place.”

Sofia playfully punched him in the arm, ”You seem much happier now. Is it nice being home once more?” They went into the terminal with no hold luggage to collect they quickly breezed past security and were soon inside the main terminal area.

“I love to visit,” said Stephen,” but I could never live here again Sofia my roots are I in England these days…. And perhaps St Petersberg now…too..”

Sofia laughed again as they went to the car hire Desk and Stephen quickly introduced himself and showed the girl his driving licence and Credit card.

“ It’s a Toyota Yaris with Sat nav petrol and a full tank of gas,” She said handing him a set of keys and a folder. ”You have AA auto call out if you need it,details are inside check the car for any dents or scratches and query the guy in the kiosk in the car park. He will show also you the car ok.”

The young girl behind the Desk then looked up at Stephen and asked,” Do you have a brother in Carrickfergus called Brian and another called Bill from there too?”

Stephen chuckled,” Brian is my kid brother and Bill was a nickname I had way back in the old days. I was called Bill Mac by a lot of people.”

The girl beamed with delight,” That’s it Bill Mac! Then you might know my dad…Steven Arthur..”

“I remember Stevie Arthur…” Chuckled Stephen.” Used to live near the Shore road by Tigers bay.. He is out by Carrick now too..”

“ My dad says you lot were all mad back in those days.. The stories he told us. I am Helen his eldest,” She replied with obvious delight at meeting one of her dads old friends.

“Your dad was right, but we had fun,” replied Stephen.” Tell him I said hello.”

“ I will don’t worry,” she replied with obvious delight.” So.. Your booked to be back by 11 am on Monday. Have a great weekend Stephen and enjoy the Craic.”

Stephen nodded and smiled at the girl and then he and Sofia followed the signs to the car park were where all the car hire cars were kept.

“So it is true ,” said Sofia with a smile.” You do all know each other.”

“No that’s just me,” chuckled Stephen. He then walked over and quickly spoke to the Guy in the Kiosk who showed him to their Toyota and they checked it over. He also pointed out the way out and told them to just park by the kiosk on their return so the car could be checked over.

“ Cheers Ben,” said Stephen thanking the man.

Sofia watched as the man walked off then asked,” Did you know him too?”

Stephen scoffed,” No I read his name badge….”

Sofia chuckled and again playfully punched Stephen in the arm.

” Incorrigible ..” she said rolling her eyes in mock anger

Stephen laughed and then quickly opened the Boot of the Yaris and loaded their bags then they climbed in,” It’s just gone nine that’s perfect. We are literally around the corner from the shipyards and the whole Titanic quarter.”

“Will your nephew be there this early?” asked Niki as Stephen fired up the car and quickly entered the Post code for Stuarts lab into the Sat nav.

“ Yes and with the kettle on,” chuckled Stephen.

They then drove out of the airport and Past the Shorts aircraft Factory on the right hand side that Stephen explained he had started work in after he left school years before. Beyond that was Belfasts Titanic Quarter. Home to the famous Harland and Wolff shipyard it was marked by the two huge yellow cranes Samson and Goliath that could be seen from as far as twenty miles away.

“ Yes the Titanic was built here but so were a thousand other ships battleships Aircraft carriers cargo ships but everyone remembers that one.” commented Stephen. As they turned into the Titanic Quarter Stephen pointed out a few striking buildings. ”That’s the Titanic Museum if we get up early on Monday we can do that before the flight home, it’s worth a look. Then that is the Titanic studios where they made The Game of Thrones and they built a replica full size Kings Landing City over these car parks.”

Just after they passed the Titanic studios they then turned right into a car park by a long two storey building and the sign read Institute for Science and Technology Queens University Belfast. Stephen lowered his window and tapped in the code Stuart had sent him and then drove in and parked the car. He texted Stuart they had arrived and picked up his shoulder bag motioning for Sofia to hop out. As they walked over to the entrance a door opened and a tall thin young man with short gingery hair and a short beard stepped out and waved. Dressed in jeans but wearing a white dustcoat he smiled warmly at them both.

“ Hi Stephen, Good Flight?” he enquired.

Stephen nodded,” great Stuart How are you?”

“Normally I am in Bed and Don’t come in at weekends but this sounded too interesting too miss.”

Stuart then gave them both Lanyards with visitors badges attached,” I hope I got your name right , Sofia. These are ok for the whole weekend.”

Stuart then led them into the building past the receptionist and through some swing doors and down a long corridor.

“ So you’re here till Monday,” he stated matter of factly.” I can do tests today and see you tomorrow afternoon if that’s ok.”

“ That’s great,” replied Stephen.

“Where are you staying ?” asked Stuart.

“Portrush tonight and Dobbins Inn tomorrow night in Carrick,” replied Stephen.

“Shame my dad and Maxine are away on Holiday,” mused Stuart.

Stephen nodded,” We will catch them next time.”

Stuart then opened a door which led into a large workshop with various benches and loads of test equipment and several offices leading off it.

“ So what have you got for me?” he asked. “ And what’s with the cloak and Dagger stuff I thought you worked for an airline these days?”

Stephen then laid his shoulder bag on a bench and picked out the pouch which contained the three Obsidian crystals which he passed to Stuart.

“ They are Obsidian,” stated Stephen.

Stuart picked one up and looked at the electrical connections that had been grafted onto one end of each of the Octogonal crystals.

“ It looks very pure high quality and I can check that easily with a electron microscope,” he stated with an air of knowledge. ”A lot of obsidian comes with varying degrees of impurities.. You came to the right place when you came here.”

“ meaning?” asked Sofia.

“Well besides meeting your favourite nephew folks, we are running a series of studies on materials that may perhaps be of more use in and improve Battery technology. Crystals are just one on the list and I checked and Obsidian is on the list too and it looks with these electrical connections someone else is playing with them. Not only that but we have recently found some very quality Obsidian crystal deposits very close to home.”

“ Where?” asked Stephen.

“ Up by where your going near Portrush,” stated Stuart who was still studying the Crystal and its electrical connections.” Do you remember the Mermaids cavern under Dunluce Castle?”

Stephen smiled,” we used to hide and play down there as kids when we went to Portrush. Me and Brian took you and Beth down there as kids… Your mum was dead against us taking you down.”

Stuart chuckled , “ well a couple from here went down and got some samples and they were really pure and they said there is a whole seam of the stuff there.”

Stuart went over to a cabinet and opened some drawers, he then produced a box which he put on the bench by Stephen and Sofia. Opening it up he produced near identical octagonal crystal shards to the three Stephen and Sofia had brought. There were another five and all roughly the same size and same octagonal shape. He then went over to a cupboard and produced a small grey device not much bigger than a mobile phone which he switched on. He then waved it over the three new shards and the ones in the box.

“Thought so,” He mused.” Alpha particles and Radon gas..”

“They are radioactive?” queried Sofia.

Stuart nodded,” Most volcanic rocks are mildly radioactive, The Giants Causeway all the Rock Dunluce Castle is built on and these Crystals. Nothing dangerous short term but some houses both here and in certain places in Cornwall have had to have Radiation meters installed. The purer the Obsidian the higher the reading…Probably came from nearer the earths core which is highly radioactive. In fact the Dunluce crystals are generally more pure.”

Stuart then looked at his Uncle,” so what are they using it for.”

“ As far as I can work out as some form of super capacitors amplification and power storage all linked together,” mused Stephen .

Sofia then produced the memory stick from her Purse ,” Have you a personal Lap Top?”

“Yes you cannot upload this on any network or the University systems,” cautioned Stephen. “ This is strictly between us and it is dangerous Stuart.”

“ At least two people has died to get us this information and we think some very bad heavies with very good tech savvy are after it.” added Sofia.

Stuart then looked at them both in turn and then back Sofia,” OK Stephen you’re an engineer I get that but who are you?”

“ She is a language expert,” said Stephen. “ You wiil see why she is needed when we upload the memory stick.”

“Ok come on,” said Stuart and he led them into one of the side offices and motioned for them to take a seat in front of a desk. Stuart sat behind it and opened a few drawers then produced a lap top which he plugged in and turned on. “ Ok this is separate from the uni network hit me with it?”

Sofia passed him the memory stick which Stuart plugged in and proceeded to upload the files and when done he removed the stick and gave it back to her. He then started to open the files and began to check them out.

“ Yeah I see why you need a language expert,” He mused softly.” That’s amazing ,have you translated any of it yet?”

“ Some,” replied Sofia hopefully. “I have only just begun.”

Stuart then slid the laptop around so they could all see the screen Sofiaa then took the mouse and proceeded to show Stuart where the technical diagrams were.

“ This language is old Runic,” advised Sofia.

“ Like in Vikings,” chortled Stuart.” Like in Ragnar Lothbrok.”

Sofia nodded with an almost Vulcan style,” Correct Stuart, it is exactly like that.”

Stephen then reached over and used the mouse to click on a icon and the picture of the obsidian crystals identical to the three they had brought appeared it even had the electrical connectors fused on the base.” If you look at the diagram’s the crystals are connected in like a reverse pyramid fashion. You can’t read the words yet but the numbers are going up big style and I think that’s power being amplified stored and directed…”

Stuart was smiling,” This is fucking ace folks.. but I think we are going to need more crystals. This could be an amazing breakthrough.”

“You have to be careful and tell no one,” cautioned Sofia.

Stuart nodded,” I am the only muppet from this department in here over the weekend and my girlfriend doesn’t care what I do.. she is a sports therapist.”

“Well we are going to Dunluce,” mused Stephen.

“ Right Hang on here , “ said Stuart who got up and wandered in to a another room. After a few minutes he returned with a medium sized backpack he then put it on the chair by the door and opened it up. He quickly checked its contents and lifted them out to show Stephen and Sofia as he did, “ We have two powerful headlamps on hard hats both working two picks and two chisels plus some bags and oh another torch… working. This is Danny’s bag it was him and his missus who found the crystals a few months back. He isn’t due back in till Tuesday.”

“ We can bring it back here by 12 tomorrow,” reasoned Stephen.

“ Ok I can ring Dunluce and let them know your coming.. they keep the gate to the Cavern tunnel locked now unless there is a organised tour but the ticket girl has the keys and they love us .. “

Stuart then crossed over to another desk and pulled out two high vis jackets that like the hard hats had the Queens university logo on them.

“ It will look official,” smirked Stuart.

“ The Obsidian will it be hard to find?” queried Sofia.

“I doubt it,” scoffed Stuart.” Danny is blind as bat if he found it anyone can. He said you will pick it out easily by its mirror like reflections using a torch. He called it by its old name ..Dragon Glass all Game of Thrones and he reckoned there was tons of it..a really rich seam. Right were we used to play.”

Stuart checked his watch” Ok when shall I say your going up?”

Stephen looked at Sofia then back at Stuart, “Look well take the motorway and drive up there the quick way. We are going to do the Giants Causeway first and Dunluce is literally two miles from there.

“ It’s near ten now if you allow an hour to drive two for the causeway say an hour for lunch.. I will say between 2pm and 3pm,” mused Stuart who smiled at them both. “ Can I offer you tea and Biccys? There are sandwiches in the vending machine at the end of the corridor and sausage rolls too.. like them”

“ Oh thank fuck I am starving,” Said Stephen who looked to Sofia who also nodded.

“ We haven’t eaten,” she confessed.

Stuart shook his head at Stephen,” Uncle Stephen that is no way to treat a lady who by her accent is…..??”

“ I am actually a language teacher from St Petersburg Russia,” said Sofia.

“ ok totally international espionage,” chuckled Stuart.” This is like totally James Bond and one day you have to tell how you got mixed up in this Stephen.”

“ Sunday night I will buy you and Elisa a meal if you want and explain as much as I can,” offered Stephen.

“Your on,” agreed Stuart. Fifteen minutes later after a cup of tea and emptying the vending machine of cheese sandwiches packets of crisps and two packets of sausage rolls for Stephen they left Stuart with the Crystals.

In the car Stephen quickly drove out of the Titanic quarter and headed for the motorway as Sofia munched on crisps and the Biscuits. They quickly went on the M23 then M5 and M2 motorways and headed north out of Belfast with Stephen pointing local sights and landmarks to Sofia. As they passed Carnmoney Stephen pointed out he used to live nearby and then as they passed the main International airport at Aldergrove that was where he also once worked.

“On Sunday we will take the coast road back to Carrickfergus, It is slower but it is really impressive ,” he promised her.

Sofia smiled back,” It is lovely Stephen and it is all part of the Adventure.”

Stephen quickly drove up past Ballymena and Coleraine before turning right towards the Giants Causeway arriving at its car park in less than an hour. Once parked up the two of them headed to the visitors centre and Stephen got them tickets and they headed down to the seaside attraction. There along the seashore were column after column of the interlocking hexagonal and Octagonal formations many rose out of the sea others rose up the surrounding cliffs. It was a amazing site with over 40,000 columns visible and arranged as far as the eye could see and Sofia naturally had her camera out and was taking loads of shots and selfies. She read every notice board there was that explained the origins of the phenomena and the various legends as well.

“ What do you think?” asked Stephen.

She smiled and then hugged him and kissed his cheek,” It is amazing and truly wonderful Stephen. It is worth coming just to see this.. Thank You.”

“Does this make me a keeper?”asked Stephen who put his arms around Sofia and picked her up.

She smiled and teased him,” Perhaps if you put me down I might keep you.”

After an hour and lots of pictures they both headed back to the visitors centre and looked at the displays there. Stephen managed to find some vegan friendly ice cream for her and they sat outside and looked at the wonderful sights. Stephen told Sofia how they used to holiday in nearby Portrush when kids and stayed in caravans most summers. They then went back to the car and drove the short distance from there to Dunluce Castle.

The Castle was truly magnificent sitting on top of the cliffs above the stormy Atlantic ocean below It looked like something from a fairy-tale. Dunluce sits on a volcanic Basalt outcrop facing out to the Atlantic ocean and is connected to the mainland by a bridge Protected on all side by cliffs or very steep slopes. Stephen explained this to Sofia and how for most of its life the Castle was owned and ran by the MacDonnell’s who had lands both in Ulster and Scotland .For them the Irish sea was not a obstacle but more like a connecting motorway and that was why the old kingdom of Dalriada had spread from Ulster into Scotland.

They quickly parked up the car then picking up the back pack Stuart had given them, put on their Hi Vis jackets and carrying their hard hats they headed into the visitor centre. The ladies behind the desk as soon as they spotted the Day Glo vests with the university crests waved at Stephen and Sofia. One lady immediately came around and introduced herself and invited Stephen and Sofia to follow her out to the Castle.

“ Yes we were told to Expect you earlier on and are very happy to help,” she announced.” We only open the Cavern to the public for guided tours as we don’t want people running around unescorted down there. However the chaps who do them are not in today so your in luck and you’ll be undisturbed. ”Have you been down before?”

Stephen nodded enthusiastically, “plenty of times and as I kid I used to play down there with my brother and cousins.”

“ Oh good,” she said. “ Though these day s we cannot let children play down there but remember be careful as some rocks can be wet and slippery.”

“Oh I remember,” agreed Stephen.

She led them across the Bridge to the impressive main Castle and to a innocuous brick building not very big at all that more resembled a outside toilet. Around one side was a like a large solid looking door which the lady unlocked and swinging the doorway open she waved them in.

“I have turned the lights on and will leave them on till you return.. I will close the door after you but you can open it from the inside so enjoy it.”

Stephen and Sofia put on their plastic hard hats and turning their headlamps on they entered the steep tunnel. They both giggled as they slowly picked their way down the slope and watched where they carefully placed their feet. The floor was rough and only had a few steps at the very start, after that the slope was quite steep and they were grateful it was lit. After forty or so metres it started to level out, they then rounded a corner and both gasped at the amazing sight. A huge cavern opened up in front of them with a narrow channel that lead out to a large opening and the ocean beyond. The sunlight that shone in seemed to bounce off the rocks and the water and make the whole place shimmer in a truly magical way.

“ It is beautiful,” gasped Sofia who was amazed at the many shimmering colours. The waves that washed in also helped reflect the sunlight in such a way as they moved that it seemed to pulsate almost magically.

Stephen chuckled ,” I told you it was good.” A old ruined spooky castle on a cliff, a secret hidden tunnel down to an underground cavern with access to the sea. You couldn’t make it up could you.”

Sofia was of course taking pictures and her usual selfies and they both posed for a few before they both began to explore the Caverns floor and walls.

“Legends sate it was a gateway into the mermaid’s hidden realms,” said Stephen. ”Hence the Mermaids cavern name.”

” Amazing, “sighed Sofia as she wandered through the huge cathedral like cavern.

“Just think from what we are learning there could be some truth to the old legend,” mused Stephen absentmindedly .” It looks like the Dragon Glass or Obsidian can actually lead us to other realms.”

After a few minutes Sofia called to Stephen and pointed to a shimmering section of the walls rock face,” Look at that Stephen could that be it?”

Stephen quickly walked to Sofia and then he shone the powerful torchlight to where she was pointing. The torch beam where it shone on the shiny rocks was reflected away in all directions by many mirror like surfaces. They both crossed over and could see the familiar octagonal crystal shapes that rang all along the wall and in the floor.

“Over there too , and up there ,” said Sofia who now after learning what to look for could easily spot more out crops of the rock at the back of the cavern running up to the ceiling. ”It is truly magical Stephen….. fantastic even…”

“Dragon Glass,” sighed Stephen recalling the mythical name for the magical formations. He then clambered over boulders and rocks to get to the nearest formation and then taking off his back pack he reached for the Chisel and pickaxe. He tapped at the joint between two crystals gently at first and then harder and harder. With a loud click a obsidian shard perhaps nearly a foot long came away. He then went for another then another soon becoming accustomed to how hard he had to tap the crystals so get them to break off without shattering. Sofia collected the crystals and wrapped them in the rags. In around a hour they had collected around 50 of the shards half filling the back pack they had brought.

“ What do you think?” asked Sofia.” Have we enough?”

Stephen looked around the Cavern,” well we know where to come if we need more there must be hundreds of tons of it in here.”

Stephen then lifted the back pack and felt its weight,” I think is quite enough, its heavy now. I doubt we could take or carry anymore. I say we go back put these in the car then have a look around the rest of the castle.”

“Agreed,” said Sofia nodding. Stephen then picked the back pack up and swung it onto his shoulders. Then he swung around but Sofia pulled him by his arm back around to face her. She then put her arms around his neck and hugged him and kissed him gently first on the cheek and then the lips. “ Thank you Stephen this is magical… I think…Yes I think I will keep you.”

They both made their way back along the tunnel and up the steep slope treading carefully as they went to the surface and emerged into the warm sunshine. They then returned to the visitor centre and thanked the Lady who said she would lock the gate. They returned to the car and put the equipment and high vis jackets back in the rucksack with the crystals. Then locking the car they returned to the Castle to explore it properly. The castle was for most of its history and still is owned by the Macdonnells family and was for several hundred years was quite opulent and impressive. However after the family backed The deposed King James the Second they fell out of favour with the new king. As a result they moved out of the Castle and it fell into disrepair and the rumour of part of the Kitchens collapsing into the sea were just that, a myth. They found though the castle had numerous ghosts and even a supposed Banshee that would collect the souls of those poor mortals that were soon about to die.

It was a beautiful and sunny day and Stephen and Sofia explored the ruins and enjoyed the magnificent views from its battlements posing for selfies and enjoying the spectacle. Then around four o’clock Stephen decided they should make tracks and headed back to their car. It was a short drive of about ten minutes to Portrush and they found their hotel which was on the main street with easy car parking around the back. As they waited to book Stephen checked the menu of the hotel Restaurants and told Sofia of the Vegan options on offer. Sofia agreed it was ok so when they booked in Stephen booked a table for two at 6pm and Stephen asked was there entertainment for the evening.

“ We have a folk night tonight,” said the manager.” It’s a local band so a mixture of folk and various tribute songs they are very popular and should be on about Nine pm with a dance after in the hotels main bar.”

Stephen knew Sofia loved Irish folk and traditional music and he could see her smile and her eyes light up and he nodded to the manager, ”that’s us sorted for the night.”

They then headed to their room which was on the second floor and Stephen put their bags down. He checked out the Bathroom and told Sofia, “ It looks ok but I need a shower Honey.”

Sofiaa nodded .” OK you go first then me.”

They both showered and changed and they still maintained a coy sense of modesty , with Sofia changing in the Bathroom. Stephen reminded himself that although they had known each other for nearly 18 months online they had only actually met in person on Thursday two days ago. He berated himself to be patient and he beamed with delight as She emerged from the Bathroom wearing a light cream coloured Dress.

“ You look absolutely stunning ,” he stammered.

He wore a bright Hawaiian shirt over his cargo pants and desert boots and as Sofia sat by the dressing table to apply her makeup he examined some of the crystals they had found in the Mermaids cavern.

“These look good too..”

“We struck gold today,” she agreed.

Once ready they made their way down to the hotel restaurant and were shown to their table. The hotel although fully modernised dated from the 18th century and had kept much of its character With thick oak ceiling beams and the main walls stonework were fully exposed .Its walls were also decorated with paintings or pictures of the area dating back hundreds of years too whilst on shelves were many things like Brass ships compasses navigation aids or other unusual items.

The waiter came over and offered them drinks, they both just ordered Lemonade and Stephen ordered a veggie soup for starters with a vegetable lasagne and chips for his meal. Sofia also went for the soup starter but then ordered a spicey vegetable kebab and chips for her main course.

Sofia found her mind wandering back to recent events,” It is so hard to believe everything that has happened to us.”

“Well you actually saw them transport into the room,” Reasoned Stephen.” I missed that, but yeah its mental. What did it look like?”

“It was the sound at first,” she said trying to recall it.” Then I looked around and two small glowing balls of light appeared, they shimmered like a rainbow and grew. They elongated and stretched then got very bright as their figures appeared out of it. They started as like a shadow inside the lights and then gained shape colour and form…it only took a few seconds but it was totally fascinating…and almost hypnotising.”

Stephen nodded eagerly,” And a lot of the stories we watched at home and loved were based on a truth.. I really want to know what is true and what was fiction.”

“Even some of your Doctor Who and Stargate it seems,” mused Sofia.

“We know Kirk existed but did Spock?” wondered Stephen.” I wonder will they even tell us. I mean did Archers Enterprise exist and what about your beloved T’pol?”

“And First Contact..” wondered Sofia.

“ Which we know really happened at Carbon Creek,” corrected Stephen.

“Perhaps, “ Mused Sofia.” However we met those two yesterday and they have been to earth before and the writings indicate the Melkorne have been interfering with humanity for thousands of years.”

“So the real first contact might have been in the Stone age,” agreed Stephen. “More like 2001AD or even like in the chariots of the Gods?”

Their first course arrived and the pair enjoyed their meal and Stephen was ravenous devouring everything with gusto, when done Stephen had it put on the room bill but tipped the waiter generously. He then suggested they take a walk around town before coming back for the folk night. Stephen remembered his way about town and took Sofia to the amusement park near the harbour.

“We used to love this place as kids ,” he told Sofia as he enjoyed the memories that flooded back. They went in and had a go on the Rollar coaster and then the Big Dipper Ferris wheel which gave them a great view of Portrush and its marvellous beaches and the distant cliffs. Following that they had a go on the Dodgems and Stephen bought Sofia a Candy Floss. They wandered out and down to the picturesque harbour past the various fishing and leisure craft yachts and schooners that were packing the marina out. The towns streets were filled with holiday makers families and lots of youngsters all enjoying themselves. They had a look at a load of the shops that were selling various Holiday items.

Sofia bought some things for each of her sons and Stephen treated her to a T Shirt that had a printed design with Dunluce castle on the Front and the Giants Causeway on the Back. She then insisted on buying him a similar one and they both giggled and laughed like teenagers as they strolled down the street and back towards the Hotel. They went back up to their room and put what they had bought away before heading down to the bar to be ready for the band.

They grabbed a small table near the dance floor opposite the bar and watched as the group were setting up.

“Do you trust me?” asked Stephen with a certain conviction.

She smiled nervously ,” Well I did until you said that.”

“ Well you cannot come here to Ireland and not have some Guinness Sofia,” he said.” Have you tried it before?”

She looked nervous,” No and remember I don’t really drink much Stephen…”

“ Trust me I will get you a Guinness, but with a twist and you will love it,” he promised happily.

Sofia nodded nervously and watched as Stephen laughed and went to the Bar where he chatted to the Barman for ages and then the Barman fetched the one of the band over. She watched as Stephen laughed and chatted with him as well and in the end they shook hands and the bandsman clapped Stephen on the back. After joking with the barman he returned to their table carrying two pints of the dark beer.

“ So this is Guinness?” queried Sofia.

“ Special Guinness,” replied Stephen.” it’s a pint of Guinness with a shot of Tia Maria in it which is a coffee liquor and turns a dull pint of the regular dark Stuff into a nectar I have had made just for you Sofia.”

Stephen picked up his pint and took a swig and then smiled at Sofia who nervously picked her glass up and sipped it and he watched as she smiled.

“ My, that is nice…” she cooed.

Stephen looked triumphant, “ I told you didn’t I?.”

She then looked at him,” Your on anti biotics …isn’t wrong to drink?”

Stephen shrugged , “ The doctor said in moderation it would be ok and I haven’t had a drop all week so that’s a few moderations saved up.. Besides I am at home and with a beautiful lady.”

Sofia took a larger swig of the beer,” So you were chatting to everyone over there what was that about? Do you know them too?”

Stephen smiled,” No but it is my rule first time anywhere new in this world introduce yourself to the barman buy them a drink and get them onside. I have done that in LA, San Francisco Sydney, Honolulu and the Arctic everywhere, get the barman on your side and he can tell you where to go for the best food or fun gigs you name it. I asked about the band and they told me they do a bit of folk a bit of Van Morrison the Pogues you name it, they reckon by the end of the night we will all be up dancing..”

“Will you dance Stephen?”

“I may need a few more of these first and then you never know Sofia…There might be a surprise for you,” he joked.

“ Its good to be in Ireland at last,” sighed Sofia. “After all these years my mother and grandmother would be so happy it was they who loved celtic folklore and history and the music. It was because of them I grew fascinated by it too”

“Well that’s great but I just want you to be happy Sofia.”

“I am Stephen,” she smiled back at him.

He leaned forward and said to her ,” We have to get you talking like a local ok. So remember we are here in… NORN IRON.”

“ N O R N I R O N… Norn Iron,“ repeated Sofia slowly.

“ Yes but repeat it faster and faster honey NORN IRON,” People here tend to talk quicker than the English so they shorten the words.

She repeated it several times until Stephen laughed ,,,” That’s it you got it next I will teach you what an IDGIT is and many other things and then you will be like a local Sofia.”

The two laughed and joked like this until the band were ready to start then Stephen got two more drinks in and he was happy to see Sofia was enjoying herself. The band had two vocalists a man and a lady who both played instruments as well. He had a guitar whilst she had a fiddle there was also a sax player another guitarist a drummer and another guy who had a harmonica a fiddle and a flute. When they started off they started with a few Van Morrison classics Brown eyed girl, Moondance and of course Bright side of the Road.. They then switched to The Green fields of France, Whiskey in the Jar, Wild Rover, Dirty old Town and many more. Occasionally playing a more modern tune like a Thin Lizzy or U2 track then back to some older Irish tracks.

Sofia ended up having four pints of the Black Stuff and she was really enjoying the music and the friendly banter with Stephen laughing at his numerous silly stories. The floor had gradually filled with mostly couples and it was a really good night then the band paused and the girl singer took to the mike.

“Now folks we have a special request for a special lady in the audience who has come all the way from St Petersburg in Russia. I want you to put your hands together for Sofia ! “ The singer pointed to Sofia as the crowd clapped and many shouted for her to take a bow.

Sofia looked at Stephen, shot him a Vulcan style glare but then smiled, then laughed and stood up and as everyone cheered she bowed to the audience.

The singer then announced ,” This one is for you Sofia…I will Find you .. By Clannad! So drag your man up there and have a slow dance for us! Come on Sofia We all Love you!”

Then as the band started to play the slow haunting melodic number Sofia looked at Stephen and smiled holding out her hand. He stood up took her hand and they went on the floor and to more audience applause they embraced then danced to the number.

“That’s what you arranged earlier, “ she whispered in his ear.

“ I thought the perfect song for the perfect moment for my perfect lady,” replied Stephen who then noticed a tear in Sofia’s eye. Without thinking he leaned down and kissed it away then she turned fully towards him and they kissed slowly and tenderly their lips savouring each others touch. Their tongues very gently tasting each other softly caressing the other as they moved in time to the hauntingly beautiful song. Then gradually they then began to kiss each other deeper and with more passion. …..When the song ended the Singer laughed .

“ And Thank you Sofia and her man who better get a room booked for tonight!”

Sofia and Stephen broke off and realised they were being clapped and everyone had been watching their dance and spontaneous display of affection. So Stephen waved to the band and the crowd and bowed as Sofia giggled and sat down back at their table. Soon the band played their last few songs and then a DJ took over and Sofia indicated it was time to go.

They stood up and made their way back out of the bar into the main hotel lobby and Stephen paused and gently pulled Sofia back into his arms and she happily complied.

“ Did you have a good night? “

She then smiled and pulled him closer and kissed him again and again softly at first and then with a wilder passion than before .. His hands roamed over her back her waist slowly caressing and stroking her teasing her and he had to restrain himself in case he went too far in public. She then broke of her kiss and looked at him with a look of contentment and perhaps more..

“Lets go Stephen I want you to take me to bed…”

Stephens mind raced as they slowly made their way through the hotel both giggling like a pair of teenagers every so often pausing too kiss again. When they got to the room she put her finger too her lips and said ,” Let me go to the bathroom first…ladies things …then you go Stephen then you come back to me xx,, .”

Stephen got undressed as Sofia went to the Bathroom then he went in when she came out. He decided to brush his teeth and spray on more after shave on and bodyspray. Then after checking himself in the mirror out he came out of the bathroom into the darkened hotel room. He could see Sofia under the covers wearing her baggy t Shirt and he slid into the bed beside her then he heard the soft almost kitten like sound of her breathing. She was he immediately realised totally passed out and asleep he looked at her lying there and a thousand thoughts crossed his mind and many were lustful then he rolled over and sighed..

”Poor old Stephen still always the good guy….”

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CHAPTER 5

For the first time and with some satisfaction Stephen woke first and smiled when he turned and saw Sofia was still fast asleep. She looked incredibly cute wrapped in the duvet and he chuckled as he listened to her as she almost purred as she slept like a satisfied kitten. Checking his watch and seeing it was nearly seven thirty he quietly slide out of the bed and quietly went to the bathroom. He quickly shaved and showered. As he re-entered the room Sofia stirred and stretched her arms yawning as she did so.

She sat up and rubbed her eyes,” Stephen I remember we had fun and danced…”

“..And kissed,” added Stephen with a grin.

“ I do not remember leaving though,” she sighed.

“ It was probably the four pints of Guinness each laced with Tia Maria,” suggested Stephen with a grin .” You loved it Sofia.”

“ Yes I did but you know I don’t normally drink alcohol.”

Stephen shrugged ,” Don’t worry you didn’t do anything wrong or even embarrassing. Anyway come on, up you get its time for an Ulster Fry or whatever else you want.”

Sofia quickly got out of bed and then selecting the clothes she would wear from her case she went into the bathroom. Stephen quickly dressed in a fresh Black t shirt which he would wear over some grey jeans and pulled on his desert boots. In about twenty minutes Sofia emerged and was also dressed and good to go in snug fitting blue jeans and a matching Blue Polo type top.

“ You go on down ,” she suggested. ”I’ll ring my Lads and see you down there.”

Stephen nodded and quickly made his way down to the hotel restaurant where once settled he was pleased to see the hotel restaurant offered for breakfast a selection that included a full Ulster fry. This was once the staple breakfast at the weekends for most of Ulster and consisted of potato bread soda bread and wheaten bread fried eggs bacon and sausages with beans. In a concession to modern times the breads were now toasted but back in the day they would have all been fried. He also ordered fresh orange juice and a pot of tea.

Sofia soon came down and looked happy.

“All good with the Lads?” asked Stephen.” Is Rex the dog ok?”

She nodded happily,” It seems they are having a great time Micheal is at his friends for the birthday party and Peter is with his girlfriend and they are looking after Rex.”

She then scanned The various offerings on the breakfast menu and after consulting with Stephen of what an Ulster Fry was she opted for one but with no eggs bacon or sausages. Once done they both headed back to their room brushed their teeth and packed their bags within ten minutes they were loading their car and soon driving out of Portrush.

Stephen opted to take the classic coastal road back to Belfast once more taking them past Dunluce the Giants Causeway past golden beaches stunning cliffs and the deep blue of the Atlantic ocean. Past the deep lush green glens of Antrim and through small seaside fishing villages they drove until they neared Carrickfergus with its Norman Castle overlooking the towns harbour. Stephen parked the car in the carpark by the harbour and they both got out and walked over to the Castle entrance. Just then his phone rang and Stephen excused himself and stepped away from Sofia to answer it…he chatted for several minutes before returning to Sofia.

“ Was it important she asked?” sensing a different look on his face.

“It was Our Stuart,” he replied. ”He is really excited and says he has important things to show us back at his Lab with the Obsidian. I told him we would get there for one pm so we can still have a look around the Castle.”

“Did he say what he discovered?” asked Sofia.

“No but he sounded like the kid who discovered Santa’s workshop.”

Stephen put his phone away and gently took Sofia’s hand,” we can still have a look around the Castle.. come on.”

With that they both went into the stone fortress and Stephen told Sofia all he knew about the place and how he and his brother and friends used to play here as kids. She smiled and laughed at the amusing tales he told her of his childhood adventures. Stephen told her how the Town was called Carrickfergus and it meant the Rock of Fergus and Fergus referred to Fergus the Great a legendary King of the Dal Riata whose Kingdom stretched from eastern Ulster to the west coast of Scotland. Fergus heirs would eventually conquer all of that kingdom and the Ulster Scots would give its present name Scotland. They took loads of pictures of the castle its battlements cannons and explored the Keep and its dungeons as well as its battlements.

“ I had plans for us to go to Spoons the pub across the road for lunch,” Mused Stephen.

“Is it ok there?” queried Sofia.

“It’s handy,” he replied nonchalantly .” It used to be rough as fuck back in the old bad days, but its ok now.”

“Rough as fuck means what?” asked Sofia.

Stephen smiled,” Back in the bad old days it like a lot of the bars had security guys on the doors searching people for weapons before they let you in…there were a lot of shootings back then in the Troubles.”

“My god that’s awful…” gasped Sofia.

Stephen nodded ,” ..and if you didn’t have a weapon they gave you one…”

Sofia gently punched Stephen in the arm,” Always joking Stephen.”

“ Part of that is true though,” chuckled Stephen.

“It must have been awful growing up then, but it looks so lovely now,” said Sofia looking over the town from the Castle walls.

“ To me well in the Troubles, it was just normal,” reasoned Stephen.” It was like I was living in an adventure…”

“And now we have our own adventure Stephen,” said Sofia Softly.

Stephen chuckled then glanced at his watch,” Speaking of which we should make tracks and go see my nephew before he wets himself… We can come back another time noney and explore Carrickfergus properly and I will treat you to a nice meal.. I promise.”

Sofia smiled,” I would like that Stephen… I used to listen to the song years ago and now you have brought me here…thanks.”

Stephen leaned down and kissed her,” And I will again.”

The two of them then slowly walked back down the steps from the battlements and back through the castle Gates towards the car park. Stephen pointed out along the lough and in the distance you could still make out the two huge cranes in the Harland and Wolff shipyard.

“It’s ten miles so no more than fifteen minutes drive,” he reasoned out loud.” It’s Sunday so hopefully there shouldn’t be much traffic..”

“I am intrigued to find out what your nephew is so excited about?”

Stephen nodded in agreement, ”let’s go find out then…”

The drive from Carrickfergus took them past some of Stephens old haunts his old high school and Greenisland where he once lived for some years and he pointed them out to Sofia and told a few funny stories along the way. They soon reached Belfast and Stephen headed back to the Titanic Quarter which was always overshadowed by the two massive cranes. Once there they drove past the Titanic exhibition centre and the studios and pulled into carpark for the University workshops and Labs. Stephen texted Stuart to say they had arrived then they got out and got the haversack from the boot and all the equipment they had borrowed. When they reached the reception Stuart was already there and he looked very happy indeed.

“Come on folks your going to love this,” he said happily as he urged them too follow him back down the corridor to his lab and workshop area.

“What did you find ?” asked Sofia.

“ I will show you,” said Stuart.” It is bloody amazing!”

He then led them back into the workshop they had been before there was a odour of burning and to one side on a bench was a small electronic device that was charred and looking burnt and blackened.

“An accident..” mused Sofia.

Stuart nodded,” I will come to that later but no worries..did you get anymore Obsidion?”

“A load more,” replied Stephen who was carefully laying the equipment they borrowed on a table.” There could be hundreds of tons of it there and all high quality.”

“So tell us what you found?” asked Sofia

“ I will show you,” said Stuart who then led them to another room where in the centre of it was a table where the Shards and they were now visibly connected in a triangular formation and wired up to a machine.

“Now don’t touch,” cautioned Stuart.” as they are charged and it could be quite lethal.”

He then sighed and began “I used the Obsidian we had plus your three and one more shard I borrowed and connected them as the diagrams showed, introduced a small charge to the one at the pointy end…”

“The point y end.?” Chuckled Sofia.

“ Yes its my scientific term… the pointy end,” replied Stuart. “ Basically we have just 4 stages in their diagrams they have fifteen and at every stage here the power doubled the voltage went from 240 to almost 2000 volts and the amperage went from 13amps to 28000 that’s massive almost exponential. Not only that but after I switched the power off it held the charge in fact it still does with no loss at all.”

Stuart pointed to the digital readouts on the machine it was connected to..” not the slightest drop not even a millivolt that’s better than the best battery and the only limit is the initial charge I put in. This baby could produce perhaps twenty times more power than this and god knows how powerful the proper machine is and their diagram shows 32 of these machines connected together. We are talking such a machine could produce and hold and of course discharge the power equivalent of a nuclear power station. We are talking up to 5000 Mega Watts easily and possibly a hell of a lot more.”

“So how is it doing it?” asked Stephen. “Newtonian law states..”

“Energy can neither be created nor destroyed it can only be changed from one form to another Stephen..” cut in Stuart.” Exactly so I I borrowed every bit of test kit we have I raided every workshop and looked to see what was going on….then I found it.”

“What did you find ?”asked Sofia.

“Like you said Stephen The Obsidian is absorbing all light energy and not reflecting any of it and that’s why it’s so jet black, however its not just light energy this is absorbing…So let me show you,” urged Stuart who then went to the window and closed the Blinds shutters then he went and opened a draw and produced three pairs of shaded Plastics goggles.

He then handed a pair to each and said,” put them on when I say so .ok”

He then went to the wall and turned down the light strength and as the room darkened they could see the Obsidian crystals seemed to glow faintly ..” Ok now put the goggles on folks”

Both Stephen and Sofia audibly gasped when they now looked at the device as they could now see the crystals were glowing a blueish colour and blue beams of light invisible to the naked eye connected each shard in a criss cross interconnecting fashion.

“ It’s wonderful…” commented Sofia.

“ So what is doing it?” asked Stephen ever the engineer.

Stuart smiled,” Its neutrinos….. we are lucky in the science lab they had one sensor that can detect neutrinos and I borrowed it…well I borrowed them all ,but I put most of them back now.”

“So how does it work?” asked Sofia.

“Neutrino radiation and particles are all around us but they are tiny smaller than a electron infinitesimally small and scientists thought being so small they could serve no purpose but a few people suggested they do have a mass and they do move therefore they must possess kinetic energy. I surmise putting the initial charge in the Obsidian attracts the neutrinos and we know crystals refract light and therefore the neutrinos enter the shard and collide giving up that kinetic energy into electrical energy and create a electron. This is happening on a atomic level and by the millions and so it builds up and up.”

“ Amazing,” agreed Sofia.

“This is Immense,” reasoned Stuart.” This is just a rough mock up I could make the equivalent of a car battery the size of a pack of cigerettes. Sets of batteries made from this could power a car for thousands of miles you could run turbines that could power aircraft. Rolls Royce Elon Musk would give anything for this Stephen. This is real Nobel prize winning stuff It will change everything for all of us and not just us …mankind even.”

“Well just remember it was your dearest Uncle Stephen and our Sofia brought you this,” chuckled Stephen.” Finders Fee I think at the very least!!”

Stuart turned the lights back on and collected the Glasses from Stephen and Sofia..

” So what happened with the test equipment in the other room?” asked Sofia.

“That was when I was just setting up and luckily only using the 3 crystals you brought in a 2 stage super capacitor I had it connected up to that measuring detector and in my haste I misconnected one connection. This baby is a one way system if you misconnect it you are inadvertently reversing the flow and it discharged instantly frying that machine. If I did it on this one which has 4 stages it could blow up the room and imagine if you did it on a full fifteen stage machine you could take out the building..”

“So you reversed the Polarity….” Chuckled Stephen

Stuart thought for a moment,”….well yes ..I suppose.

Sofia was not so impressed,” ..Doctor Who… really Stephen…At this time, with everything and you go to Doctor Who “

Stuart chuckled now ...” Oh yeah I get it…”

Sofia then turned to Stephen and looked serious, “ I think we should tell our friends what we have found Stephen this could be a major breakthrough for them too.”

Stephen nodded and Sofia left them both and went back into the other main workshop with her mobile phone at the ready.

“Who are your Friends?” asked Stuart nervously.. ” Secret Service or Men in Black? Like James Bond or MI6?”

“More like The Men in Beige, but think more like Star Trek,” muttered Stephen quietly to Stuart.” I think though Stuart it’s going to get a bit more interesting for you now…..”

Stuart then asked to see the other Obsidian crystals that they had collected from the Dunluce cavern and Stephen began to lift them out from the rucksack and stack them on a separate bench from the Super Capacitor device. Stuart examined them and checked their radiation signature and was happy they were all very pure.

“ Again these crystals are better than the three you brought us originally and they could do a much better job,” reasoned Stuart.

Just then the door opened and Sofia came in followed by Toreq once again wearing his woolly cap and Branion who as usual didn’t look too happy. Stephen smiled broadly at the sight of their two ever reluctant friends.

“Hey guys hope you have been keeping well? How’s your translation going? Toreq and Branion I want you to meet Stuart my nephew who specialises in Nuclear power and energy and he has worked out how our other friends are generating the power for their Portal..”

“Portal ? What portal?” asked Stuart. “ you never mentioned any Portal.”

Stephen smiled at Branion,” See we only told him what he needed to know guys.”

Stephen then turned back to Stuart,” Have you anymore of those glasses I think we can show our friends what you found out Stuart. I think it would be better that way.”

Stuart went back to the drawer and rummaged around until he produced more of the glasses then he ran through his explanation of what he did and what he found out about the crystal shards their properties and their uses and powers. He then turned down the lights and showed them the super capacitor in operation and its use of neutrinos. When he was done he turned the lights back on and turned to the two newcomers. Toreq produced from his shoulder knapsack a small scanner which he feverishly adjusted then he slowly waved it over Stuarts Improvised 4 stage super capacitor and checked the readings.

“Your 100% correct it is using Neutrino particles and converting their kinetic energy into electrons these crystals when charged are sucking the neutrinos in until they reach their potential that is designated by the strength of the initial charge then they store it. The conversion of neutrinos into energy is not new but the use of these crystals is extraordinary,” stated Toreq. “ We never scanned for Nuetrino radiation before nor did the Temporal Agency….This is quite remarkable.”

Stuart looked pleased that his work was being accepted but he looked surprised and asked Stephen, ”So who exactly are your friends Stephen?”

“ This could lead to a breakthrough in the same way Di lithium crystals led to Matter anti matter propulsion..” mused Toreq almost absentmindedly. He then picked up one the crystals that Stephen and Sofia had acquired at Dunluce and scanned it. “ Its radioactive signature is distinctive and possibly unique to this planet.”

“That could be why we caught them in a stolen ship by Rena 5 system they were looking for something like this Obsidian in the volcanic moons…it must be rare,” reasoned Branion.

“Which is why they have been stealing known samples from around the globe,” suggested Stephen who then added , ” Well we just found the motherlode of all Obsidian.”

“Ok just what is going on?” asked a now somewhat baffled Stuart.

Stephen looked to Toreq who instantly looked at Brannion, The portly alien sighed and shrugged his shoulders,” Very well tell him.”

Toreq sighed with relief and then looking to Stuart he slowly pulled his woolly hat off..

Stuart laughed,” No fucking way Uncle Stephen.. you brought me a Vulcan.”

“ Yeah I suppose I did..” replied Stephen smiling triumphantly at his nephew.

Toreq then proceeded to explain to Stuart everything that they knew about the device the Melkorne the Federation Starfleet and the Temporal Agency. When he was done the Scientist was both visibly shocked and impressed.

“ What do you think?” asked Stephen.” Do you want to help?”

“ Are you kidding me?” replied Stuart.” Of course I am in..This is amazing and everything I ever dreamed off. To take it further though we need to translate the writing..the Runes. I can figure out the schematics and numbers but the writing can really nail this down.”

Sofia turned to the two Starfleet officers,” Did you not have any luck?”

“ Yeah I thought you guys had universal translators?” chipped in Stephen.

“ We do and it has over 40000 known languages and it can often translate new ones that are similar but you humans are very tricky,” replied Toreq. “ On Vulcan there 5 distinct languages spoken and another 7 dialects…On Betazoid there are only 3. On many worlds there is is just a one or two spoken language but on earth it is staggering.”

“ There are more than 6500 languages spoken today on earth and over 31000 historical languages going back to ancient times,” stated Sofia with an almost Vulcan like air of authority.

“ She is a language expert,” added Stephen. “ You really want to listen to her guys”

Toreq nodded,” When we fed the languages you found into our computer it spat out its translation but it was utter gibberish …total nonsense that we could make no sense off.”

“ You will have to show me, with your computers I can hopefully translate these languages even quicker,” stated Sofia.

Toreq looked to Branion,” We can also run better tests on the crystals and analyse them using our equipment on the ship.”

“ Plus your looking to visit Los Angeles undercover and did I mention guys I actually know Los Angeles quite well? Also we are human and can fit in easier then you two,” added Stephen.

“Fine ! “ announced a exasperated Branion.” We will all return to our ship to solve these problems prepare all the samples and we can carry on our work there.”

Stuart leaned over and flicked a switch on the test machine that was attached to his 4 stage Super Capacitor then watched as the readings rapidly fell away.

“ I set it too discharge,” he told Toreq. “ I can spare a few hours guys but that’s all I am meant to be eating out tonight with my girlfriend and you guys are meant to be coming too.”

Stephen chuckled,” And you will Stuart don’t worry we will all be having dinner in a few hours with your girlfriend..tell him Toreq.”

“Our ship The Pashtan is a Federation Timeship even if it takes a week to sort the problems we can return you here to within minutes of you leaving sometimes seconds even… Lieutenant Branion is one of the best Timeship navigators in the entire Temporal Agency.”

“ Clothes food ..” uttered Stuart who was astounded at what he was being told.

“We can create new clothes for you in any style and any food stuff too..our ship is not large but it has everything you may need. I t can accommodate in an emergency up to 50 people for several months…Do not worry,” said Toreq in a effort to placate Stuart. “ It is named after the Vulcan explorer and Philosopher Pashtan.”

“Its all Timey Wimey wibbly wobbly stuff ,” added Stephen as if he undertood everything.

“Ah Doctor Who,” noted Toreq with a rare smile..” But yes.. Time is not a straight line from A to B and as the Doctor says it can be slowed down accelerated and bent backwards or forward s within its own timestream. This ship is from the 29th century and can go backwards into any time before then but not into its own future…”

“ Come then into the next room,” urged Branion guiding them into the larger room next door and standing in a clear area next to a office.” If we stand in a small circle now stand still and no touching…”

“ And the bag with the crystals in?” Queried Stephen.

“ I will just get our bags from the car,” stated Sofia who held her hand out. Stephen passed her the car keys.

“Get mine too and make sure it’s locked ,”cautioned Stephen.

“There is no need,” said Branion.” We can provide everything.

“I will be back shortly,” stated Sofia who quickly left.

Stuart then grabbed his laptop from his office,” It has the uploads.”

In a few minutes Sofia returned with her and Stephens luggage and Stuart had his laptop plus a bag of other essentials..

“Just some spare clothes in case of accidents, I keep them in a drawer. ” reasoned Stuart.

As they all stood in a circle In the middle of the room Branion looked as if he was finally happy as he observed his new companions.

“Just hold them by your side,” urged Branion. He looked around and satisfied he then reached into his jacket inside pocket and pulled out a small device no bigger than a mobile phone. He then tapped in some instructions..

“ Relax now we are about to transport up..enjoy the experience…”

Stephen smiled at Stuart and winked at Sofia who looked very excited then everything seemed to go opaque almost in a second and He felt a tingling sensation spread all though his body. It wasn’t unpleasant just different and he could hear the same melodic whispering tone he had first noticed in the hotel room the other night when the two Starfleet officers had teleported in. Then the lights of the room seemed to change and everything went opaque again then as his vision was restored he could see they had indeed transported somewhere else. He looked across and saw Sofia and couldn’t help but smile as he could see she was astounded as he and then too Stuart who started to laugh. Both Stephen and Sofia laughed and he stepped across and hugged her.

“ That was amazing …” she gasped

“ We got beamed up on a starship…” laughed Stuart.

“ Transported ,” corrected Toreq.” It’s a transporter that transports people and things…beaming is just silly TV talk.”

“Okay ..Sorry,” said Stuart. “Do we get the grand tour?”

Toreq looked at Branion who nodded ,”Show them their quarters, one of the standby Four berth rooms and show them where all the facilities are. I will be on the Bridge.”

Toreq waved the three humans over to the sidewall of the transporter room where there was a interactive map of the ship and as he touched the picture a overall external view of the ship appeared on the wall. She looked smooth a flowing design with Twin engine nacelles mounted almost directly on the hull on either side and elevated slightly on struts and the forward oval saucer section fixed directly to the front of the hull on the same level. She was a shining silver colour and although it still reminded them of the classic star fleet designs it was still markedly different and it looked much sleeker. He then touched the picture again and the picture changed into a detailed schematic breakdown of the ships internal layout.

“ Here we are,” he said pointing to where the transporter room was on the diagram in the main saucer section. “The main saucer has all the day to day accommodation although you can access the hull and nacelles this would be really only for repairs or maintenance and is not normal. There are three decks with lifts in the middle but ladders and stairs at either end and to the sides. The upper deck contains the bridge transporter room where we are, the medical bay, the ships armoury ,workshops and science labs with stores fwd. Centre deck has crew accommodation galley stores and deflector and shield generation controls. The bottom deck has the ships Brig, the ships weapons systems then access to the shuttle craft of which we have 3 and shield generators plus the impulse drive.”

“ No shuttle bay?” queried Sofia.

“Larger Starships do have those we have three shuttles that dock directly into the ships lower hull plus twenty one escape pods 7 on each floor. The ship is designed to be fully automatic and have a crew of 4 normally but as I said she can operate with up to 50 personnel for months at a time. Come and I will show you around.”

He then led them out through the automatic sliding door into a bright corridor and took them to where two lifts were situated flanked on either side by stairs. Toreq took them downstairs to the middle deck and pointed out where his room was then then further along he opened a door and showed them into a room which was clean and had four large beds and various cupboards and he showed them it had a bathroom and a seating area with a water fountain for drinking water. He then went over to a desk where a computer station was and opening a draw he got a small scanner out. He then took it in turns to scan each of them getting them to turn around as he did it he then entered their details into the computer and showed them how to select clothing and select shoe sizes. He then showed them how they could pick various colours and styles and as a example he ordered a T shirt for each of them with their names on the back in different colours.

“No red shirt For me ,” cautioned Stephen which raised a snort from Stuart and a smile from Sofia .Even Toreq understood this joke and smiled. Then a few second s later a buzzer sounded and Toreq opened a panel and lifted out the garments freshly made.

“This replicator just does clothing,” he cautioned them.” Or you can duplicate exactly the clothes you are wearing now but change colours etc.. I will show you. It has scanned your sizes in and will automatically remember them.”

Toreq the opened another cupboard and showed them a machine that could clean their clothes in a few minutes and explained how to use it and another which had a machine that disposed of any waste. He then led them back out the corridor and took them along to the front section where he led them into a control room.

“ This is the deflector control room but it has one interesting aspect,” he said pointing to the far wall that appeared blank. He then pressed a control and the wall panels slide back to reveal floor to ceiling windows and they all gasped as they could for the first time see out of the Starship into space. Below them sat the earth a stunning beautiful and shiny blue green marble floating in the eerie darkness of space. It was an amazing sight and they were all lost for words.

“ We are around 700 kilometres above the surface well above your satellites and space stations and out of harms way,” he told them.

“ So are we cloaked?” asked Stuart.” can they see us?”

“There is no need for such things we are a Timeship and are orbiting your planet but we are deliberately a few seconds out of phase with the time below, 3 seconds in their future and so we are always invisible too them. Though our three shuttle pods do have the ability to be cloaked we however do not need it.”

“ It is ….beautiful,” sighed Sofia who stepped forward and pointed to the earth below.” We are crossing the Pacific Ocean now…you can see the clouds and even the streaks in the water that ships plumes make.”

“It’s absolutely amazing,” agreed Stuart.

Toreq then pointed to a shiny object coming into view,” I believe that is your ISS your International space Station just coming into our arc, the reflections are from its solar arrays. I sometimes come here to meditate with the screens open… I find it very satisfying and Relaxing.”

“It is fantastic Toreq thank you for showing us,” said Sofia with genuine affection. They stood for some time enjoying it and each laughing at the sights pointing out various things before Toreq said it was time to carry on. He pressed the controls and the windows were shielded and covered up once more. He then took them down some stairs to the lower deck and showed them access to the three shuttles there was one large one in the centre and two smaller ones flanking it. He explained the centre one could carry cargo or up to 30 people whilst the other two could carry up to ten people in each but that would be a tight squeeze. When docked they formed a integral part of the ships hull. He then showed them the weapons array on either side of the corridor that contained torpedo tubes and blaster arrays and then he led them back and showed them the impulse engines that were actually powering the ship now in orbit.

He showed him the access doors for the hull and engine access but reminded them these were rarely used. He told them the ship was mostly warp core and engines with only one third of the ship being used for the crew and living quarters.

“ This ship develops more power than most Starfleet Starships even those fifty time times its size with hundreds of crewmembers and their large shuttle bays and that is because of the immense power required for time slip. When a time slip is initiated we generate the equivalent power of a small sun.”

“So tell me?” queried Stuart.” With a ship this advanced can you not simply go back before your Commander and Lieutenant Died and save them both?”

“ Sadly that would be a breach of our temporal Prime directive and anyone who joins the agency has to agree to that before they can be enrolled. Agents like myself from the 24th century are only accepted if our timeline shows if we die in service it will not effect the overall timline.”

“So history wouldn’t miss you?” queried Stuart.” In your life you would have made no significant contributions to History.”

“ But by joining the agency I can in my way contribute to history,” mused Toreq.” However we shouldn’t change fixed events and bringing back the dead is one of them sadly.”

Stuart nodded,” I get it.”

He then took them back to the central lift shaft and they ascended to the top deck where he showed them the medical bay the galley and various labs that they would soon be using, including the ships armoury and workshop with a weapons range.. He then led them up a slight ramp through some thick double doors and onto the Ships Bridge. In front of them was a a huge screen flanked by other smaller ones all showing the view outside of the ship orbiting the earth. Various panels and workstations were arranged in a semi circle with seats at each station and in the centre of it all was control console station with two seats and behind that the classic Captains chair with Lieutenant Brannion sat in it.

Brannion for once smiled and appeared relaxed ,” So did you enjoy your tour?”

“ It was fantastic,” replied Sofia. ”We are so grateful and now we want too help.”

Brannion then stood up and waved the rest to follow him off the Bridge and back through its automatic double doors.

“ The main science and research lab is just through here,” he said leading them forward along the main corridor and through some automatic doors. Inside this room were half a dozen workstations and various benches and loads of test equipment at each workstation was a computer station and various other screens and panels on the wall as well. Branion nodded and Toreq took Sofia by the hand and bade her sit at one workstation. As she did the Computer sprung to life and Toreq showed her how to access the Information and languages they had uploaded. Then he showed her how to access the universal translator and its results plus how to access the many other historical language files. He showed her how to put various sources up on different screens on the workstation and a larger screen on the walls so she could cross refer easily.

Sofia was clever and quickly asked Toreq if they could upload and access the earths internet below and Toreq quickly showed her it was possible and how she might do it. She was a consummate and very clever professional and in a few minutes was quickly scanning through and calling up more and more research material.

“ Concentrate on the Runic text Sofia,” asked Stuart.” As that’s directly relevant to the technical problems we have to solve.”

Sofia nodded ,” I agree and will start now.”

She quickly asked the computer to access the earths internet network and search for references and guides to the Runic alphabet. Sofia had previously in London looked at the runic alphabet used in the technical downloads and suspected it was in the earliest Scandanavian Germanic styles. She knew the runic writing was probably related to the Etruscan scripts and alphabets that of course was gradually replaced by the Roman Latin script in most of Europe. Of course in Germania and Scandinavia the Romans never truly reached so the Runic form of writing survived and in time evolved. However like any language there was variations the earliest Scandinavian and Germanic alphabets used 24 letters yet later Anglo Saxon Runic text had up to 33 letters which was the same as her own modern Russian alphabet. Also one of best clues where the style of the letters used in the scripts and Nikita pulled up different styles of the letters on different screens and compared them to the letters in the uploaded original draft.

For a second she thought about where she was and all that had happened and pausing she looked around and almost had to pinch herself. Serendipity Stephen had always called it and she smiled as she thought about all the fortunate chances that had brought her to this place and she wondered was her daft Irishman and beloved friend Stephen correct.

She remembered being lonely as a child and reading her mums sci fi book Aelita an early Russian Sci fi tale about two Russian explorers who not long after the Soviet revolution built a spaceship and travelled to Mars. The inventor of the ship and engineer fell in love with the beautiful Martian Princess Aelita and that story had nurtured and began Sofias love for science fiction. It began a lifelong interest with sci fi which led her of course too Star Trek, her cosplaying and then much later by chance to her meeting with Stephen online.

Again Serendipity as her grandmother and mother had instilled in her a love for Celtic history and music… and she now had finally met her Irish friend. She thought about that time when aged nine she accompanied her friend who was going to a private English lesson .The teacher took a shine to Sofia’s apparent interest and natural curiosity for the subject and invited her to come back and she did. The teacher, who was called Galina, was fantastic and Sofia picked up her love of the English language from her. Helena became her teacher and later her friend and eventually a work colleague. She wished Helena could see her now and see where her teaching had led her and was sure she would be proud of her. Sofia officially studied languages at school and later university learning to speak German English French Latin and a bit of Chinese. At university she had also studied ancient languages such as Sanskrit to show how languages had evolved and all that had led her here. With her love for Sci Fi and the Cosmos she had once thought of applying to the Russian Space Agency for a position but had been knocked back… yet here she was sitting and she was part of the crew on a Starship orbiting the Earth.

She thought about her two sons and was glad that she knew they were safe and she was sure they would be proud of what she was doing and she almost welled up and shed a tear as she thought of her beloved mother . She wished her mother could see her now and see all those dreams were being fulfilled and quietly she wiped away the tear from her eye.

Sofia looked around the amazing ship she was on and then looked over to Stephen her Irish friend and sighed …They had known each other online for a few years but after Sofias husband had died they became slowly closer… Stephen had often chatted her late at night when she was sad and felt alone. They had a stormy friendship often they had daft misunderstandings and fell out for a time or argued over the wrong use of a phrase or words. Sofia learned Stephen was married and she refused to fall for her Irish rogue or any married man and had told him so in no uncertain times often blocking him when he suggested anything more than a friendship. Yet she knew Stephen had helped her when she was down and through some rough times when she had money worries and he was a good man.

He was always saying she should have a back up plan to fall back on a plan A then a plan B or C and this had become a in joke between them. He was always suggesting alternatives too her. Now she knew he had now split from his wife some time ago… serendipity perhaps, she wasn’t sure but again here she was orbiting the earth on a Starship so anything was surely possible now.

She turned back to her screens and was slowly convinced as she studied the style of the runic letters this was indeed the earliest version of the Runic script and so was using the 24 character alphabet. Now she had established this she fed into the Starfleet database the correct alphabet and its English equivalent and asked the computer to translate the scripts. After a few second the translation appeared on the screen and Sofia smiled when she knew she had been right some words had been misinterpreted but it was starting to make sense now. She started to make corrections and then asked Stuart to come over and see if he as a scientist could understand it now.

“Wow that is amazing Sofia,” he said after he read the screen. ”God your amazing. I can see why my Uncle Stephen fell for you.”

Sofia smiled and then supressing it gave him her best Vulcan deadpan look ,” Your Uncle Stephen and I are colleagues and good friends Stuart.”

Stuart chuckled ,” Yeah right..”

Stuart then turned to Toreq who was using a larger scanner to obtain more readings on the Obsidian crystals… “ Get over here Toreq I think Sofia has nailed it…”

“ There are some corrections that need to be made still…” said Sofia who felt slightly embarrassed by this sudden praise .

Again Stuart laughed and called to Stephen, “ She is truly a genius Uncle Stephen.”

“ I know she is a keeper,” joked Stephen who had been working on a separate workstation. Yet despite that he felt his emotions rise when Sofia was involved or even mentioned and he tried to play down their friendship. They had been friends for a few years now but Stephen knew he was smitten and as much as he tried to keep it friendly he knew he had fallen for this woman from St Petersburg. Over the last few years he had followed Nikita’s many pictures of her native St Pete’s.

He shook his head to clear his thoughts and he addressed Branion to help set him up and show him how to operate the ships computer system. Stephen asked if he could study all the ships logs relevant to this mission and Branion had agreed and showed him how to do it.

So Stephen had sat down and asked the computer to play in chronological order from the first to the last all reports and files concerning the Melkorne and the ships mission. He was able to read how the Temporal Agency had been aware for some time that certain Artificial Temporal Anomalies had come to their notice. These were detected by a similar energy burst where it occurred but the Agency at first had no ideas who was responsible with some reports had indeed suspected some of the Suliban factions. Ships had been captured and mining and sensor equipment stolen and the perpetrators were widely reported as human or human like.

After reading these reports Stephen saw the first log entry of Commander David Walker the leader of the Pashtan and the crew. The Commander looked in his early forties with a thick head of black hair a chiselled face with bright blue eyes and he seemed a confident likeable guy. He stated that from the reports thus far it seemed these humans were stealing ships and equipment to be able to detect, search and even mine or recover a substance. He like most of the Temporal Agency believed and suspected Di Llithium was the target for these bandits as it was unarguably the most valuable commodity in any of the galaxies. Therefore he planned to take his ship to the nearest area where volcanic activity was recorded and he would target any area that had known di lithium deposits after any temporal Anomaly occurred.

Three times he tried this but three times it didn’t work and they missed their target ship and then Walker stated they had received news of human traders buying crystal samples from mining corporations throughout the galaxy. The description of them matched the reports but it became clear they were after different crystals than di lithium and he surmised it could be something rarer and therefor more valuable. He had the Pashtan travel to the mining region od Kraxon 6 where many deposits of rich minerals were found, it was run by the Ferengi community on a money up front and no questions asked basis. Walker had a contact there and he had said humans matching the descriptions he had been given had been in touch and were after checking if the Ferengi had any of the materials they needed.

Soon after the Pashtan arrived at the region and detected an energy anomaly followed by the appearance of the stolen freighter. After first getting an accurate scan of the ships strange energy signature they watched as a shuttle from the freighter flew down to the surface of the mining colony. Walker then transported down with Lieutenant Treya and both were dressed as merchants who were also after rare minerals from the Ferengi and their allies. Walker didn’t plan to arrest the Humans just learn what he could and be able to track their ship. Walker and Treya met their Ferengi contact and after paying him in Gold Pressed Latinam coinage he took them where all prospective customers could check on the minerals that were on offer and they could negotiate with their hosts.

He reported the human suspects of which there were six heavily armed warriors and one leader seemed to be bitterly disappointed with the minerals on offer. They had checked and rejected all the minerals on offer and showed the Ferengi a sample of what they sought… Walker explained how he approached the humans and offered too help if they could. The human commander allowed Walker to scan the mineral and he was surprised as it actually showed an earth signature. However then an argument broke out with one of the Ferengi traders and one of the Humans which quickly turned into a firefight. This turned bad when the Humans happily threw blast bombs into the surrounding area and soon the whole trading base was going up in Flames.

Tragedy struck when a blastbomb landed near Walker as they withdrew and he was saved by Lieutenant Treya who pushed him to safety Treya was injured in the blast and then crushed by fallen pillars and despite Walkers efforts he could not free her in time. Sadly Treysa died and by the time they had returned to the Pashtan the humans had left the sector.

Walker then decided to go against their normal rules and go back along their own timelines where they had detected the Energy anomalies. Instead of sitting as he had in the past near Dilithium deposits they would go elsewhere and use their sensor reading they had of the ships energy signature to track them. Walker made it quite clear to him these were no human bandits but now their enemy and murderers. When they took the first Timseslip jump they took too long to complete the jump and then detected the stolen freighter too late before it too jumped again. However they were close enough to detect that the enemy ship had jumped back in time to the Earth in strangely the 21st century. Again they tried to go back on their second intercept trip and again it took them too long to trace their freighter but this time they narrowed down the scource of the energy anomaly to the west coast of the USA in and around Los Angeles.

In the next file on the ships computer Walker reported Ensign Toreq had developed a new computer algorithm to trace the stolen freighters unique energy signal and so they went and revisited their third trip. This time they successfully caught the stolen freighter scanning the Volcanic moons of Rena 5 for their rare minerals. Walker intercepted it and told the Freighter to surrender however to everyone’s surprise these humans had successfully up gunned the freighter and it vigorously fought back. Walker and the Pashtan skilfully disabled the ships weapons and shields and after a short firefight ordered them to surrender.

They then detected two alarming readings a smaller temporal energy anomaly was detected onboard the ship which then started to trigger a warp core overload. Walker tried to rescue the crew but only managed to transport two of the crew to safety and retreat just in time before the ship exploded. However the temporal energy had eradiated the two survivors and both men were dying and this was when they learned these humans were in the service of the Melkorne who the humans believed were as gods. Toreq had managed to trace the scource of the energy signal to again Los Angeles in 2051 on June 6th near Pasadena.

Commander Walker and the Pashtan reported this information back to the Temporal agency and then carried out a timeslip jump back to 2051 and assumed a direct orbit above Los Angeles.

Stephen then clicked on icon and he was able to watch the showdown between the Pashtan and the Enemy ship as filmed from the Pashtan. He was able see the enemy ship as the Pashtan closed in too intercept it. Compared to the sleek lines of the Pashstan the stolen freighter resembled a medium sized ungainly shipping container with a smaller ship grafted onto the front. Several energy shots from the Pashtan hit the freighter whilst its return fire were easily absorbed by the Pashtans defensive shields. The Pashtan quickly flew close to the enemy ship and fired a series of very well aimed shots taking out its shield generators and its weapons arrays. Then after about 15 seconds a glow appeared inside the main hull that then spread throughout the ship until in the aft engine area a second explosion occurred. This within a second or two in a blazing flash vaporised the ship and anyone left on board. The next report showed the enjured but defiant crewman yelling at Walker and Branion that they would suffer if they crossed the Melkorne who had been mankinds Gods for nearly Ten Thousand years. Stephen shook his head at the sight of any human so brainwashed and noted the mans attire a sort of reddish brown short leather jacket and trousers with solid leather boots that clearly resembled a uniform. He wore a belt with pistol holsters and various pouches. As part of that he clearly sported four stripes on each arm and he thought that was a rank insignia and therefore it was definitely a uniform.

The next clip showed the second crewman in a simpler grey fabric uniform trousers and jacket he was burned badly yet warned Walker to beware the Melkorne as they had enslaved and murdered millions. He warned Walker they use our bodies to walk amongst us and they can feed of us too. Stephen watched as the man faded and died then paused the computer and turned to Toreq who was speaking with Sofia.

“Sorry Guys but Toreq did you search them and recover anything?” he asked.

Toreq nodded and then walked over to a cupboard and recovered two plastic boxes for Stephen.. It contained their clothes and personnel effects but it was noticeable the man in the leather uniform had far more effects including a wallet and money and passes.

“We copied the man in leathers uniform and passes and money for Commander Walker to use in his subsequent trips, “ stated Toreq.”We found the badge and pass is for the security section of the Unity Corporation owned by Malachi Uttick which in 2051 runs most of the state of California including the Police Fire and rescue departments and also universities and hospitals. He has Energy and other interests in this state and in many States across the USA as well as Canada and parts of Europe and Russia too. He also has Aviation transport and shipping links and is actively testing and developing a fusion reactor as a power scource. Commander Walker reckoned his fusion test reactor could have been the power scource for the Time device but all the readings we scanned showed its power output to be insufficient. It is rumoured Uttick has bank rolled the present Governor of California Kenneth Altman and may replace him if the present Governor can make a successful presidential run. Temple also owns two of the main and most popular us news tv and satellite news networks in the country as they are free to use.”

“ I thought you said it was a political stalemate in the US?” queried Stephen.

“It is, but the eight biggest corporations of which the Unity Corporation is one of the largest are rumoured to have bankrolled enough senators and congressmen to force a re run to be accepted. Most of the rest would not oppose it as it would promise an end to the present day uncertainty and chaos …”

“ How about if you combine his test fusion reactor with our Melkorne device?” suggested Stephen. ”that would surely make the difference.”

“ We did not know of this device then but Commander Walker did suspect Malachi Uttick and his corporation and it was on his final trip investigating his facilities that he disappeared and he sent us a message telling us to meet him on in London in June 2022..”

“ I haven’t got that far yet,” replied Stephen. ”That will probably be tomorrow.”

Just then a familiar voice piped up and Stephen recognised it as Stuart, “Folks check out the time it is near 9pm. Surely time for food and a break I think.”

Stephen looked over at Sofia who smiled and nodded back then he turned back to Toreq,

“Food and drinks are on you mate,then?”

Toreq nodded in agreement then led them to the galley where they were joined by Branion and they were shown how to use the food replicators. Toreq demonstrated this to the newcomers and showing them how to switch it on.

“ Then name the planet and the food or meal you wish to have including preferences if it doesn’t recognise it then it will tell you or offer you its nearest alternative. Please remember all the meats are actually vegetable derived but I am told they are quite acceptable.”

“ What about drinks?” asked Stuart. ”Can I get a beer?”

Toreq nodded,” yes alcohol is permitted but not on duty, again name the planet the drink the temperature in degrees and the alcohol percentage. Commander Walker had it also do various earth cocktails these are preprogramed so the machine will recognise and know them.”

“ I will drink to Commander Walker then,” chuckled Stephen.” I have been reading his log entries and he seemed a good guy and quite likeable.”

Even Branion smiled at that ,” I think he would have appreciated your sentiment Stephen. He was a good man, always friendly clever and brave”

They all opted for simple meals at first but then Stephen Stuart and Branion ordered a round of mojitos and raised a toast to Commander Walker and Lieutenant Treya.

“ In memory of them, for as long as your name and memory lives on then so do you in the hearts of your families comrades and people. Let them live forever,” announced Stephen to the delight of Branion and Toreq. Branion then ordered some more drink,s a Betazoid spirit he assured Stephen and Stuart that many humans liked.

“I remember you telling me that once some time ago,” said Sofia to Stephen.” If you wrote our story down we could in effect live forever. You said it matched the ancient Egyptian and even the Vikings beliefs. ”

Stephen smiled at her words and all the memories flooded back of how they had first met online around two years ago now.

“ Are you not on duty ?” asked Stuart of Branion.

“ Not now and It is ok Toreq as a Vulcan does not consume alcoholic drinks,” Branion reasoned.” I am beginning to grow fond of you 21st century humans. Your less serious than those in my century… I wasn’t sure at first but you are slowly growing on me.”

Stephen lifted up the glass of green liquid given to him and knocked it back then hugged the portly alien which caused Sofia to giggle and even Toreq the Vulcan smiled wryly.

“ I love it,” laughed Stuart.” Here the Vulcans can have a laugh too….”

“I am glad we are done my eyes can only look at a screen for so long,” sighed Sofia.

“You did well Sofia,” said Toreq. “ Your skills are amazing. I am sure tomorrow we can understand how the Melkorne device works and how to trace it better and then ultimately how we might destroy it.”

Stephen Laughed,” no worries there Toreq we know how to do that already.”

“We do ?” queried Sofia.

“How could you know? We haven’t finished studying it?” reasoned Toreq.

“This should be interesting,” reasoned Branion smiling as he slowly drank his green liqueur down. “ Stephen I may try another of your mojitos now..”

“ We reverse the Polarity of the electron flow,” chuckled Stephen.” And she goes up..bang it’s a one way system remember?!! “

“ oh yeah I forgot,” giggled Stuart.” We just gotta figure a easy way to do it without having to rewire the system.”

“Would a electromagnet do it?” asked Sofia.” Then you can set it off by timer or by a simple remote control device?”

“The girl is a genius,” replied Stuart who then added to Branion.” Make that 3 large mojitos my friend and double the strength.”

“Reverse the Polarity,” mused Toreq.” I have heard this phrase..before???.”

“ Doctor Who…” stated Sofia rolling her eyes in mock horror.

“The third Doctor Who played by Jon Pertwee first used it and then kept on using it because he could say it without tripping up. He hated the usual sci fi gobbled de gook talk,” stated Stephen. ”So he got the scriptwriters to use it and It eventually became a catchphrase for him and then for the programme. After that all the subsequent Doctors used that phrase at one time or another as a tribute to Jon Pertwee.”

“ But here it is actually true,” stated Stuart. “ and a powerful magnet would do the job.”

Toreq smiled,” we could easily manufacture a small but powerful electromagnetic device however I remember the phrase now… I have to say though I preferred the 10th Doctor.”

Stephen accepted his newly made Mojito drink from Branion and chortled,” Sorry Toreq. Its strictly Tom Baker as the fourth Doctor as the best followed by Patrick Troughton as the Third Doctor and in third place is Matt Smith as the 11th Doctor. That’s official repeated fan votes have agreed it my friend. It’s gospel now ..Canon even.. just like your Temporal Prime Directive.”

“ We have never seen the older programmes,” mused Toreq.” Our surviving recordings only started with the 9th doctor.”

“Hey we can download the entire surviving back catalogue using the ships computer now as we are in the 21st century,” reasoned Stuart. “There are though still some missing that were sadly not kept and were subsequently lost ..”

“They don’t have to be lost now, not anymore ,” laughed Stephen.” Not when we have a Federation time ship.”

“ Yes!” agreed Stuart enthusiastically.” We could go back in time to the 1960’s and record the missing shows from their original broadcasts……. For purely historical reasons of course. ..Can we do that Toreq?”

Toreq considered it,” Yes I am confident we could do this….but~

“ I cannot believe this…..I must be surrounded by children,” mused Sofia with a barely supressed smile on her face.” We are in the middle of a world crisis on a Federation time ship worth trillions of dollars and you would use it to go back in time so you can record some missing episodes of a TV sci fi programme.”

“ But only after we save the world of course Sofiai…only after,” reasoned Stephen defensively to her.” We can save the world first I promise, then we can rescue the missing doctor Who programmes and then only for purely historical accuracy.”

“ Oh thank you for being so sensible,” replied Sofia trying unsuccessfully hard not to smile.

“ These Mojitos are truly lovely,” enthused Brannion. “ Commander Walker kept these a closely guarded secret.”

“Does that mean we can have another?” asked Stuart giggling loudly.

“God yes, my round!” laughed Stephen, who then looked sadly at Sofia.” Do you want to try one Sofia…Just one.”

Sofia shot Stephen her sternest Vulcan glare but shook her head resignedly but then smiled at her Irish friend, “Ok…Just one Stephen. Only one”

To Sofia’s surprise Branion Stephen and Stuart all began clapping and laughing and even Toreq their Vulcan science officer joined in though he had only been drinking Vulcan orange Tea. She couldn’t help then but giggle herself when she realised where she was and what they were doing and talking about.

Chapter 6

When Stephen woke in the bed in his cabin he sat up quickly and looked around next to his bed was a table and chair and a wardrobe separating his area and bed from Sofia though he could seel she was already up and gone. He yawned and rubbed his eyes looking across the semi lit room he could see Stuart was still fast asleep and snoring contentedly. He cast his mind back to the previous night and was confident he had done nothing wrong, it had all been light hearted . He remembered they had another drink then had called it a night he remembered hugging Sofia who said she had felt very tired. He put it down to sharing a room with his nephew and sighed gently. He got up and went to the water fountain and got himself a cup of water then he got his bag and selected what to wear before grabbing his soap bag and going to the bathroom.

He quickly shaved, brushed his teeth and jumped in the shower then drying off he got dressed and left for the galley. He was pleased to see Sofia sitting with Toreq drinking green tea and eating a pastry.

“The Vulcan Tea is lovely,” commented Sofia as is the Andorian breakfast Pastry…try it.”

She pulled off a corner and offered it to him and he quickly chewed on it and smiled as it tasted sweet and of a mixture of pleasant tastes.

“ Wow I can taste vanilla and strawberry,” noted Stephen who was truly impressed.” Like wow ….is that chocolate as well?”

“ It will taste of your favourite vegetables and fruits.” Stated Toreq.” To you its earth Vanilla and strawberries to your nephew it could be apples and chocolate to an Andoiran it may be their Pears and their salty Garnis fruit.”

Stephen was very happy and went to the Replicators to order some for himself and a glass of orange juice. When he returned he sat down by Sofia.

“Your up early did you sleep ok?” he asked in a slightly concerned tone.

She smiled at him and reaching over gently squeezed his hand,” I slept well Stephen and I am fine. I just woke early and my mind was still buzzing with everything we have learned and may yet experience. I even found the steady sound of your nephew snoring almost reassuring, he sounds like you but louder…Is it a family thing that I need to know about?”

Realising she was teasing him he smiled and drank from his glass off fresh orange juice.

“ How about you?” she asked.” Sleep well and no hangover?”

Stephen shrugged and smiled,” I always sleep well and only wine gives me a hangover which is why I avoid it. So no Romulan wine from the Replicator for me I guess.”

Stephen then started to eat his pastry and again was chuffed at the tastes it filled his mouth with but was disappointed when Sofia and Toreq got up to go putting their plates in the disposal hatch. Sof1a could see him looking like a poor distraught puppy dog and quickly bent over and kissed him gently on the cheek.

“I am only next door Stephen and will see you shortly….”

“ok Sofiaa but when this little adventure is over you still owe me a guided tour of st Pete’s remember,” he replied.

“ Off course Stephen I promised you,” she replied as she slipped away.

Stephen smiled and nodded then waved them both goodbye before returning to munching his pastry. He then ordered a mug of brown English breakfast tea and was pleasantly surprised when he got the correct thing along with 2 slices of toasted and buttered brown bread. He checked his watch and in his time it was 0830 am so he went back to his room and woke Stuart before he headed off o the lab. In there he found Sofia and Toreq each at work at their own workstations and he smiled broadly at them and told them he had woken Stuart.

He then sat down at his work station and carried on reviewing The computer files and logs on the mission. He was able to see that when Commander Walker took the Pashtan back to 2051 he scanned for any unusual energy scources that might match the Temporal signature the they had detected. They had uploaded all the information they could about the Unity Corporation and its owner the multi-Billionaire Malachi Uttick and Stephen began to pore over these files. He found a picture of the man who looked a powerfully built man in his mid fifties who had previously worked as a research scientist for the Unity Corporation. He had been picked as a successor by its previous owner who was also called Malachi Utick and had changed his name by deed poll on his succession. Previously he had been Peter Campbell and once he had become the new head of the corporation he had cut himself off from all previous family ties paying off all previous family connections and associates. This all occurred over twenty five years ago and once in charge Malachi led the drive to buy out Caltech The California Institute of technology in Pasadena which also managed the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Within five years he had bought a Canadian Energy Research company that through a subsidiary in Cambridge England had been testing a new Fusion Reactor system with a new way of using electromagnetic wave fields to maintain the flow and preventing a fusion reactor meltdown. He combined this breakthrough with Russian scientists who he brought on board whose research was on how too rapidly cool the gases generated to a more manageable levels and thus also stabilise the fusion reaction. Five years ago his popularity soared when he announced they were building test fusion reactor at a specially built facility at CalTech and said this might eventually provide clean energy to the world. He promised he would share any findings to all mankind and this year he was being tipped to be a possible candidate for the Governer of California should the present Governor run for President.

Reading this was making alarm bells ring in Stephens mind and he was absolutely sure it must have been the same for Commander Walker too. He had checked the computer run scans on the facility which was within a ultra secure area of CalTech and noted the Fusion reactor had come online in 2049 and had a constant output of 1.5 megawatts. This was the equivalent of a medium sized PowerStation or nuclear submarine but hardly capable of providing the output needed for time travel. However combined with the Melkorne technology and Stephen felt sure this was the solution that they had been looking for. It seemed the ships sensors could not scan inside the facility accurately which had been a surprise to Walker and it was inside a ring of steel security. Stephen thought about this and then asked the computer to re analyse those scans and look for neutron radiation. Sure enough in a separate part of the facility a high degree of neutron radiation had been recorded. Stephen then asked if this could interfere with any of the ships systems. The computer said it reduced scanning accuracy by 75% .

Stephen then looked up all he could find out about this new annex of the facility and on the University information sheet it was labelled as the Energy Research Laboratory. He was able to use the university’s own files to see it was ran by a Doctor Kamen and he recorded the names of all the scientists who worked there. He couldn’t find any diagrams of what it looked like inside but he found several pictures of it from the outside and it looked very secure and well guarded.

It seemed Commander Walker paid two trips to the facility transporting down nearby and disguised as one the Unity Corporations Security section infiltrated CalTech. He was able to Download and penetrate the universities computer systems but wasn’t confident of getting in to the Energy Research Laboratory. Then the day after his last trip the ship detected the same energy readings that they had detected whenever a Time Portal event had occurred and he indicated he was going to transport down as it was coming from the Energy Research Laboratory.

The next file was a visual message from the Commander that he had sent to the ship. It was not a clear picture but you could see the Commander talking.

“ I managed to gain entry into the building using my phoney pass and used my scanner to find this workshop but he guards here would not let me enter so I used my phasor and stunned them. On entry to the room I found the Time portal was activated and it was still open and there were three scientists who were instantly suspicious of me. I stunned them then locked the doors from within there is also two fire doors and I blocked them. I can’t establish a normal comms link due to some interference so I cannot transport out. More guards have arrived and they are trying to batter open the doors so I am trapped.

My only way out is through the Portal I cannot read the writing on the computers its in a strange language however I can see it is set for June 23rd 2022 and the map on the display shows it is in London near the Science museum. I have been able to scan some information from the computers here but again its in a very strange language and there are some crystals that seem to valuable so I will take some of these. The interference is preventing a two way conversation I will send this recording as a boost signal so I hope you can get it. The Portal has a run down time and it seems it will remain open for another 300 seconds so hopefully I can message you when I get to London and you can follow. I will quickly try and show you what I can before I go but they are close to breaking the doors down so I have got to go very soon..

The commander then obviously turned the camera around and you could see a vertical blueish shimmering oval pool which was he realised be the activated portal and it was perhaps twelve feet in diameter and eight feet tall. He then turned it to what was possibly the control desk and it showed the keyboard that had runic symbols and to one side in a series of cases were Obsidian crystal shards.

He turned the camera back on himself and he smiled.

“ Wish me luck see you in London I hope ..Live Long and Prosper!”

Then the message ended and Stephen whistled as he realised he had just seen a fuzzy image of the actual Cosmic Time Portal in operation. He replayed this several times and noticed it roughly matched up to the Transmitter slash receiver he had seen in the schematic diagrams… This was their Cosmic Time Portal. He then opened another file which was a message from the Commander in London however this one was a voice only message.

“ Ok guys they are on to me, I am going to lead them away and I will send a package to you guys but you have to pick a destination for me ASAP and it has to be somewhere you two don’t stand out and in London. I will send you everything I have, I have downloaded the info I took onto a local mobile device and some other things such as these crystals that are obviously important to this device. That’s how we first ran into them in the24th century so hurry Toreq I hope I can meet u there but if not I will send the package on and lead them away.”

Then Stephen opened Toreqs reply ,” Commander we will be attending the Destination Star Trek Convention in London and we will be staying at the Hotel in the O2 arena on Friday the 25th of June under name Mister Stephen Mccloughlin. He is English and was due to attend but cannot as he is in hospital with appendicitis and so we can take his place and his room. Send the package there and if possible meet us there Sir.”

“Thanks Toreq that sounds ideal, I will send it on Good luck…If I am not around get the package and do not wait for me.. Live Long and Prosper my Vulcan Friend” replied the Commander.

Stephen knew this was Commander Walkers last message and he could only guess what might have happened to him. He then proceeded to check any files about the Caltech Institute and the personnel who worked there. As well as that he started to Scan the Unity Corporation and its offices around the globe he could thanks to commander Walker he could accesss to all of its websites and its files. He eventually chuckled and entered Obsidian in its search engine and found a series of instructions from The Unity corporation to all its offices worldwide to report all finds of Obsidian Directly to Doctor Kamen of the Caltech Energy Research laboratory and then to CC in Malachi Utick himself.

“ Bingo Stevie Boy,” chuckled Stephen to himself. ”I think we have found our way in and what can be our Trojan Horse.”

“ Hey its lunch time…” interrupted Stuart Slapping Stephen playfully on the Back.” Are you coming then Stephen?”

Stephen nodded ,” Yeah no Probs Stuart.”

In the galley he ordered a earth mixed Salad and a English tea then sat with his friends around a large oval table opposite Sofia.

“How are you all fairing?” asked Branion who was enjoying a bowl of what appeared to be green soup with some colourful vegetables floating in it.

“ Wow Sofia’s translation is ace,” said Stuart. “We can see the super capacitors bump up the 1.5 megawatts of the fusion reactor by a factor of ten thousand …..That’s like a medium sized star or Sun even. For local time jumps they only need a fraction of that output but for cosmic time portal work it takes everything its got. It’s like we say a one way travel corridor is that right Toreq.”

The Vulcan nodded ,” Yes you can only go one way it has to be reset to establish a corridor in the other direction and there are strict time limits…”

“Yes the Portal stays open for 14 minutes and 47 seconds every time and to go the other way you have to wait then reopen it again in the reverse direction though there is another Portal on the other side of the Cosmic Rift in the Gamma Quadrant and that’s where the Melkorne are in force..” continued Stuart.” Basically the Portal creates a Stable wormhole from where it is here to anywhere in time or space and its power generates Tachyon emissions similar to your Timeship but in its own unique way that help create and stabilise the wormhole. If they increase the power by a magnitude they can now project the Portals opening anywhere in time or space and make it briefly large enough for a ship to pass through. The Obsidion crystals not only refracts the neutrino radiation to create and magnify the energy but then on the transmitters use that power to focus and create the Tachyon pulse to open the Portal or gateway. The Federation computers and scanners were only looking for the Tachyon emissions and registering them in the temporal events they were not looking for the Neutrino radiation so they effectively missed them.”

“So that’s how they stole a freighter and got it zapping all around the galaxy,” reasoned Stephen. “ Amazing stuff folks.”

“ Yes and we didn’t realise the concentrated Nuetrino radiation was deflecting our scans but now we know what it is we can modify our scanners to hopefully compensate,” added Toreq.

“Does it have weaknesses?” asked Branion.

“The crystals themselves are the weakness they can last many jumps on local time and space jumps but only a hundred of the larger Quadrant and rift jumps. Also when they project the portal opening elsewhere and making it large enough for a whole ship to pass through that quickly burns some of them out. So they need a constant resupply of Obsidian crystals and that is why they are now scanning the galaxies for a new kind of suitable crystal and supplies on the earth are becoming rarer. However as yet no crystals have been found in any galaxy that are as efficient as the Obsidian crystals we have found here on earth.”

“ And we just found a large source of the purest Obsidian,” mused Sofia.

“ Possibly our largest Source on the Planet,” agreed Stuart chuckling.

“Our Trojan Horse,” added Stephen. “I have files showing this Unity Corporation has offices worldwide and they have been told search for Obsidian and no expense is to be spared and report back to the top if anything is found.”

“ Our way in,” added Sofia.

“ Precisely,” agreed Stephen.

Branion then looked to Sofia,” So what of the other files?”

“They are almost identical and once I crack one I can crack them all,” she replied enthusiastically.” I am working on the Sanskrit pages but these are an even older version than any I have seen before so your universal translator is of little use. I am making progress though and it is as I thought a creation or Origins tale of the Melkorne and their involvement on earth. They come from a mirror universe and were a very advanced people who had ascended to a higher form of life leaving their physical bodies behind. In this corporeal almost spirit like existence they could still observe what happened in the lower mortal world. Then some of them discovered the cosmic rift in their Quadrant and travelled through it to our universe and were fascinated by our worlds. Some of them came across the planet earth and they observed its first primitive humans and found they could influence the simple minds of its early peoples. This new found ability gave them a sense of power and pleasure , then later they discovered they could even take over and possess the bodies of these primitives and some did this to once again feel what it was to be flesh and bone . Often these possessions were fleeting and often for the Melkorne to enjoy the baser and sometimes perverse pleasures they had missed since their ascension.”

She paused to make sure everyone was paying attention,” I believe this is where the human belief in Demonic possession in all mankind’s religons comes from. However after many years some of the Melkorne found they could eventually completely take over a host human body and also draw the life force in a almost vampiric like from other humans. They could control the minds and read the thoughts of these humans and with their advanced knowledge from their own civilizations they appeared totally god like. Now some of the Melkorne were almost benevolent to the early humans and even genuinely sought to improve their lots. However word spread amongst their own race and more and more of the Melkorne began to settle on earth in various regions and set themselves up as our early deities. The Melkorne also found by absorbing the human life force they could increase their own powers and this for many became like a drug too them. Some found by using doing this and using human sacrifices they could maintain their hosts bodies for many normal human lifespans but if that body began to fail they could then switch hosts and to early mankind this was surely a sign of their divinity.

In Mesopotamia they discovered Obsidian and recognising its properties they created their first Cosmic Time portal using solar energy to power it and now they could travel rapidly between their own universe and this one. Many early human civilizations were started and ran by these god like creatures but the Melkorne were often jealous of each others success and it was they who taught mankind about warfare. Over thousands of years many human civilisations rose and fell often at the behest of the Melkorne who were just as happy to kill their own as to kill humans however it must be said they found that as the humans and their own intellect evolved the Melkorne found it harder to control the minds of these more advanced humans. They created ships that allowed them to travel the globe and they took humans back through the Rift so they could reconquer their own universe with tens of thousands of humans who were transported to the other universe to help them conquer worlds there.”

That is as far as I have got…. So far” she concluded.

“Wow a hell of a story,” sighed Stephen .” Let’s hope it has a happy ending.”

“Best we go back and get cracking then,” suggested Stuart.

Sofia nodded in agreement and got up placing her used plates and cup in the disposal device then she accompanied Stuart back to the Lab nearby. She sat down at her workstation and couldn’t help but smile as it sensed her arrival and booted up automatically. She looked around the pristine and shiny Lab and almost had to pinch herself that this was actually happening to her. It reminded her of a book she had read as a little girl. The Crimson Sails was about a small pretty lonely girl ” Soll” who had no friends but one day she met a stranger at the beach who tells her eventually a ship with crimson sails will come. It will bring a amazing man will take her away on that ship and she will fall in love with him and be forever happy. Sure enough it eventually happened for Soll and Nikita who had also been lonely as a child felt like that little girl and always wanted a ship and a hero to come and take her away. This whole adventure had happened because her Irish friend Stephen had convinced her to come and now here she was,. She could see she was now on a Federation Time ship with its name emblazoned in crimson letters across its saucer section and its hull, it seemed magical that her dreams were perhaps finally coming true.

She then turned back to the screens and tried to focus her mind back to the task at hand and was relieved her University studies helped her cope with this work. This version she realised was related to the Vedic Hindu Sanskrit dating from around the second millennium BC nearly four thousand years old. It was the classic origin story to begin with but now was becoming a more ominous tale of what the Melkorne were planning and one name was starting to turn up again and again, he was the son of the God Hanbi. He first appeared in Mesopotamia where he served his father by punishing his enemies. He was called the Demon of the winds by many and first sprang up around 1500BC . This tale told how he was a minor Melkorne who served the mighty Melkorne God Hanbi as a son might but to the Melkorne there was no family or father son relationship. Eventually he killed and usurped Hanbi and this Melkorne would be God called himself Pazuzu. He made war upon all the peoples and other gods in the region and he was truly hated and feared. Nikita cross referenced this info against other Earth religons that the ships computers could access and to the Christian Muslim and Jewish Pazuzu was also known and feared Demon and to some he was akin to the devil himself. She also noted in the Movie The Exorcist Pazuzu was cast as the evil Demon and from what she was learning she could see why and as she thought that she felt a cold shiver running down her spine.

As Sofia tried to concentrate on the ancient scripts Stephen then approached Brannion,” I have the beginning of an idea but I need your help.”

Brannion smiled ,” what do you require?”

“Can you provide miniature recording devices that can accurately record day and night for several months on end and can be hidden outside so we can monitor the coming and going of our target installation? We have to be able to access them from here and they also have to be invisible to the human eye?”

Brannion nodded,” We have such devices Section 31 developed many such instruments and we have access to all their files and designs. They can have cloaking shields and we can replicate them and transport them anywhere you want outside the building or even on it. However we cannot accurately scan inside the building due to the radiation interference.”

“ Well I suggest we go back in time three months before Commander Walkers trip and plant two by the front entrance so we can see who is coming in and out and when and one by the rear service entrance. Then when we are ready we go back 2 weeks before Commander Walkers trip and upload and study them…Is that possible?”

Brannion was smiling “I like your cunning Stephen and it can be done easily.”

“Shall we then?”

“ I will need ensign Toreq,” mused Branion,

“That’s fine Stuart and Sofia can carry on with their own work,” reasoned Stephen.” Whilst we can do three months surveillance work in a day… I like this wibbly wobbly Timey wimmey thing you guys have got going on here.”

Branion looked confused slightly but smiled.. then with Stephen he went to the science lab and on a vacant work station called up the specifications for the surveillance devices and when satisfied he transferred the files to the replicator and within seconds they had the three devices ready. He then informed Toreq he would need his assistance and the three of them headed to the bridge and Stephen explained his plan and the young Vulcan seemed enthusiastic. Branion took the seat at the navigation consul facing the large viewing screens and Toreq manned the engineering and science station over to one side. Branion then invited Stephen to take the seat next to his and informed him he was entering the co-ordinates and they would jump to March 17th 2051 directly over Pasadena. Branion then asked Toreq to power up the ships engines and after a few minutes Toreq told him they were at full power and ready to jump.

”I will engage in 3…2…1.. Now,” stated Branion and hit the selected control on the console. Stephen wasn’t sure would happen next but he felt nothing though glancing up he saw the main view screens shimmer and almost blink and the view of the earth changed and he could see they were over the American west coast above the City of the Angels. Only as the screen settled Stephen felt the tiniest of tremor through the ships structure and he smiled at Branion.

“Quite smooth,” he complimented Branion. Branion nodded and then gave Toreq the three surveillance devices that were no bigger than a hexagonal shaped Dungeons and Dragons dice.

“Will you take these surveillance devices to the transporter room Toreq and prepare to transport them one at a time but tie in the transporter controls to the bridge computer so we can place them exactly where we want them. ”

Toreq nodded and taking the three devices left the bridge.

Branion turned back and checked the consol e and various indications,” The devices are functioning their cloaking functions are ready and their anchor function will attach them to any surface or material.”

“Shall we get the Caltech Energy Research Laboratory on the main screen then?” suggested Stephen to the Navigator.

Brannion quickly played with his consoles controls and the main view screen changed and there was their target Lab and Branion zoomed the picture they could see in down until they could see the front entrance with its glass sliding doors and two armed security guards in their reddish Brown leather outfits. These were almost identical to what the crewman on the Space freighter had been wearing but these guys also wore Matching coloured open faced helmets with darkened visors that seemed to have radio mikes attached. He also noted they were wearing a holstered sidearm and had what appeared to be truncheons attached to their belts.

“Can we change the view slightly?” queried Stephen.

Brannion taped a few buttons and the view changed so they were lower down and looking at the two guards and the entrance.

Stephen chuckled and getting up went to the main viewer and pointed to a spot to one side of the sliding doors on the grey concrete walls. ”If we place one here about head height looking outwards we will be able to identify everyone coming in to the building.”

Brannion made some adjustments and a small bright cross appeared on the screen where Stephen had pointed.” Is that correct?”

Stephen looked at the cross and smiled,” Perfect…”

Branion then pressed a button and spoke to a Microphone on a stalk on his console,” Are you ready Mister Toreq ? ”

Over the speaker Stephen listened as Toreq Replied,” Yes Transporter controls have been linked to your console it will transport the device onto the wall preciously where you indicated.”

“Transport the first device then,” ordered Branion.

A few seconds later Toreq told them, ”It has successfully been transported… I will await your command for the second one.”

Branion then looked to Stephen who suggested,” Can you pan out again so we can see the front entrance and the pathway leading up to it?”

Branion adjusted the picture accordingly and Stephen pointed to a Bronze globe with the Unity Corporation logo under it mounted on a plinth about 5 metres in front of the entrance and about feet tall on the path from the car parking area. “If we placed the second one here we could see inside the front entrance especially when the doors open.”

Branion made a few adjustments and Stephen agreed and Branion then contacted Toreq who assured him the spy device was ready and within a few minutes they had planted the third device on a lamppost so they could observe the rear service entrance area. Then afterwards Branion brought all the cameras pictures up on screen and showed Stephen they could zoom in and switch to night vision and go from panoramic to zero in on a particular area.

“Ok then lets jump to June 2051 and upload what these babies have found,” suggested Stephen. Branion then requested Toreq return to the bridge and within minutes the Pashtan had performed its second Timeslip jump. Branion quickly checked and confirmed the cameras were all working and had recorded continuously over the previous three months and he uploaded their recordings to the ships computer.

“ You can access these from the lab work station Stephen just request exterior surveillance footage,” said Branion to Stephen.

“Can you can show me also how to access Caltech security files and the Unity corporation website and any other Earth Websites?” asked Stephen.

“Certainly,” replied Branion.” Commander Walker, totally accessed into the Unity Corporations computer websites and Caltechs too, we can get into any of their systems and in fact any human internet sites in this age.”

The three of them then returned to the science workshop and Toreq resumed his work with Stuart whilst Branion gave Stephen some assistance in using the ships computers to access the human websites and the internet below. After a short time Stephen was happy enough and thanked Branion as he searched Caltechs systems for any clues about the Energy Research Laboratory. He then settled back and found he was able to check the surveillance cameras and pick only the footage when someone or something new entered the screen shot. He found he was able to look inside the front doors and into the reception area where a receptionist welcomed any visitors If they were allowed in they had to pass through was a doorframe style scanning device and pass any bags etc through a another scanning device overseen by two more of the security force guys. Only then could a visitor pass through a set of double doors and enter the main building beyond.

Stephen quickly watched a regular routine develop and he watched members of staff begin to arrive from 7am most days Monday till Friday . Doctor Kamen usually arrived by 8am along with his deputies Doctors Bryce and sometimes Cummmings all within minutes of each other along with several other members of staff. In all no more than 15 members of staff were ever at he building and at the weekends this dropped to perhaps only three plus the security staff and receptionist. In all there were six security staff at any one time 2 at the front door 2 at the back and the two in reception. Of course this did not include the constant patrols of the site by more security teams including some with guard dogs.

Stephen also noticed that nearly every other day the site was visited by Mister Uttick himself always accompanied by a bodyguard who resembled a huge heavyweight wrestler. Sometimes Mister Utick was accompanied by one or two other people who usually arrived with him in a large limousine. Occasionally he would visit at the weekend and it seemed all of his visits often lasted several hours each time.

Stephen after a while felt tired of looking at his screens so he got up and checked out how Stuart and Toreq were doing.

“Oh this is ace,” said Stuart.” its basically the operating instructions for the portal and with the info we have gained from commander Walkers brief film Toreq thinks he can make up a 3D model online that you could actually use.”

“Like the Holodeck?” queried Stephen.

“ This would be similar,” reasoned Toreq.” but you just put some goggles on with an earpiece and your there. Up to four people can enter the simulation we have just some fine tuning to go and we will be ready.”

Stuart then gave Stephen some googles and a ear piece and waved him on,” Try it Stephen its really good and feels real… Put it on and I will switch it on for you, it is like one of those virtual reality simulations you can get at home but far more realistic .”

“So do you actually have Holodecks?” asked Stephen looking at Toreq.

“For a time in the 24th century they were popular but they could only work on the larger ships,” Replied Toreq.”By the end of the 24th century this system was developed and it could be used on any ship and by crewmembers even in their own quarters. Some systems let numerous crew members use it but of course ours is limited to four to suit the Pashtan.”

Stephen put them on and relaxed as Stuart switched on the programme..” He felt strange as almost instantly it appeared he was in a new room which he recognised as the room from Commander Walkers message. At one end of the room was a gentle ramp to a raised plinth and set about 13 feet apart were two tall metal Transmitters that appeared curved and had lots of wiring running from each of them to various banks of machines. Stephen reasoned in the blank space between the two curved stands was where he had seen the blue oval shaped glowing light in Walkers Transmission. When he looked at these metal Transmitters Stephen realised they were covered in more obsidian crystals, in fact literally hundreds of them. Then to one side of the banks of machines were control consoles and looking at them with their various screens and displays were keyboards with their Runic symbols. When Stephen looked at the various banks of machines stacked on to each other and beside each other he recognised the pyramid insignia drawn on each and he realised these must be the supercapacitors. There was also several benches with other equipment and the silver boxes that he knew should contain spare crystal shards.

“ How does it look?” asked Stuart.” Remember you don’t have to physically move in the virtual reality just think about it and the machine picks up your thoughts.. It takes some getting used to but once you get it then it’s ok.”

“ A bit strange,” replied Stephen as he took the goggle and earpiece off.

“Soon you will be able to push the buttons and turn it all on,” reasoned Toreq.

“ Can you match it to our scans on where it must be in the real building? “ asked Stephen.

Toreq turned to a computer screen and flicked a switch an new image appeared which appeared to show the buildings plans. “ Since we adjusted for the Neutrino Radiation we have got a better look inside the building not accurate enough to transport into but it shows you where most things are…”

Stephen could see and recognise the rectangular building with the reception and a short corridor with various offices on either side and two larger rooms. At the end of the corridor was clearly was a single large room.” Is that our baby ?”

“ It must be….. it’s the only room big enough,” reasoned Stuart. “This is over two stories in height and the service doors are on the back of it with two smaller fire doors to the sides.”

“So how did the Commander lock all the metal doosr?” asked Stephen.

“You can set your phasor to a high heat setting and melt the locks in seconds,” suggested Toreq.” I am sure that’s what he did. It’s what I would do.”

Stephen then looked over to Sofia and smiled, ”How are you getting on?”

Sofia looked at Stephen with a puzzled expression,” These are difficult to translate Stephen but the scripts as I progress are growing more terrifying. I hope I am wrong Stephen because if not we are all in mortal danger.”

“ What have you found?” asked Stephen with some concern.

“ I need to cross reference against the other languages Stephen, I cannot be wrong,” she said.” Peoples lives could depend on it even your children and mine Stephen.”

“ Can I get you anything too help?” asked Stephen.

Sofia nodded ,” Yes Water thanks Stephen.”

“Anything honey you name it ,” he replied heading back to the entranceway that had a water faucet on the wall next to it and a cup dispenser.

Sofia turned back to her screens and flitted between the Sanskrit scripts and The Cuneiform Sumerian ones. Cuneiform didn’t use letters but syllables to form words and when Sofia got stuck on a Sanskrit’s words meaning she jumped over to the cuneiform version to see if that helped or made it easier. It was a simpler form of writing and around 5000 years old and probably the language that the people of Pazuzus time and regions used. For now she virtually ignored the Mayan texts with their Glyphs and although she could pick out a few matching words in all three texts she decided to stick with the Sanskrit and Cuneiform. Gradually she was starting to make sense but the story it revealed was a scary one.

Stephen had returned with a cup of water but Nikita hardly noticed as she tried to concentrate on the translation. It was only when Stuart said he had had enough and it was gone dinner time did she realise it was nearly 7pm in her time.

Stephen gently put his hand on her shoulder,” Let’s eat honey.”

With that this group of people who were now becoming true shipmates made their way to the galley and took their turns in ordering food from the replicators then sat down as a team together again at the large central oval table. Once more Branion invited them each to inform the others about what they had learned and accomplished that day. Toreq started but was occasionally interrupted by Stuart who was better at simplifying things as he told them how he believed they know how the Cosmic Time Portal was operated. He also said using their virtual computer created simulation they would be able to operate it tomorrow thanks to Nikita’s translations but even there she would have too help as the control keypads were in Runic symbols.

Stephen then explained how they should jump two weeks after Commander Walkers incursion into the Energy Research lab to see what security enhancements may have been made by the Corporation. Branion agreed this could be done easily as they had left their surveillance cameras in place and continuously recording and it was just a matter of one time slip jump in, quickly upload the data and jump back again.

Then they all turned to Sofia who had been quietly eating her meal and listening to the others and she slowly gathered her thoughts.

“ I am just about done,” she said.” There may be a few corrections but I have learned enough to know the Melkone under the Leadership of their would be God and Leader Pazuzu are not just a minor danger to your timelines. They under him are a direct threat to Earth, The Federation and every civilization in this universe…”

“ Wow,” chortled Stuart.” They have stolen a few ships and some technology’s it is hardly the end of our civilization.”

Sofia slowly shook her head,” the files we found began with a brief history of their race in this galaxy but it goes into the reasoning behind the Demon Melkorne God Pazuzus plans and what he wants to achieve. Basically after thousands of years on this planet the Melkorne were finding it harder to control the minds of the humans and many returned to their own universe but as I said taking tens of thousands of their most loyal human followers. Some of these Gods we might know Amun Osiris Hathor RA, Horus, Baal, Odin, Thor, Fenrir, Lilith they returned to their own mirror universe to reconquer it. Many of the Melkorne who remained here as Gods were eventually destroyed by Pazuzu and his followers. His greatest follower of all was Marduk the god of the Babylonians who was also called Moloch.”

She paused and then said,” The Largest Temple dedicated to him and his love for child sacrifices was found near the ancient Phonecian city of Utique and permitted by Pazuzu for his loyalty. Pazuzu said Moloch was his gatekeeper or should we say Portal keeper and from Moloch we get Malachi Utick ie Malachi of Utique.”

“ So this Malachi Uttick head of the Corporation is a Melkorne hiding in plain sight of everyone and could be the next governor of California and man behind the nest President of the United States?” reasoned Toreq.

“Yes he is, the documents state it,” replied Sofia.”.. but he doesn’t care about the presidency or California he and Pazuzu have a much bigger game too play.”

“Long ago Pazuzu also returned to his own mirror universe but Malachi his gatekeeper was tasked in staying here and keeping him supplied with any technologies he could to help him win his war against the other Melkorne and other races in his own universe. He could steal them from any timeline in any galaxy or trade stolen designs from unscrupulous species such as the Ferengi and he did so again and again.

Now Pazuzu is in the ascendency in his own universe and he plans to make a return here, he has taken the best plans from your 23rd 24th and 25th century star ships from your Federation, from Romulan cloaking devices and even Borg sub space corridors. He has built a fleet of over one hundred and eighty advanced and mighty starships and has over two million of his once human Terran warriors and many other species from his own universe. These Terran warriors were once human but have been bred and conditioned By Pazuzu and his scientists to show no mercy and no fear. They will make the fiercest Klingon warriors seem like kittens… He is building a Super Cosmic Portal in his own galaxy so they can invade this universe, it seems Pazuzu had a soft spot for this universe. He has tasked Malachi to send him enough Obsidian to make it and they are well on their way. This portal will be several kilometres across so his Star ships can safely pass through, but that’s not the best part of his plan…”

“ What else has he got planned?” asked Branion.

“ Pazuzu is well aware of this universes histories and how the Federation has helped it to defeat the Borg threat as well as the Dominion and he knows the histories and the capabilities of its other races. He knew he could still face a threat from a combined Federation Klingon Romulan and Cardassian fleets so he worked out how to nullify it.”

“How?” queried Toreq.” Even millions of warriors and over two hundred advanced Star ships with cloaking devices could not guarantee him success.”

“ What exactually was the Scientific state of play for the Vulcans High Command Toreq in the human year 1900, at the dawn of their twentieth century?” asked Sofia gently.

“ The Vulcans were only just beginning to experiment with warp drive Theory , it had not happened yet. Pashton who this ship was named after had challenged the Vulcan scientists to see if it could be made to work. He wanted his peopleto explore outside their galaxy but in your year of 1900 they had not yet done so,” reasoned Toreq.

“We can’t be sure but it is believed no one had mastered warp drive in that human year,” muttered Branion who was clearly shocked at this dangerous implication. “ The Klingons were then locked in a endless civil war with themselves using sub light ships within their own galaxy. It is believed the Romulans had some knowledge but only with the theory of warp capable ships but they had no desire to explore the universe The Cardassions were again just experimenting with sub light light spacecraft with impulse and Ion drives…”

“ So in 1900 with no Federation or any of the other intergalactic empires and these wonderful alien races who could seriously oppose him?” asked Sofia sadly.

“ No one,” mused Toreq with a distinct air of defeat.

“He plans to seize the earth in 1900 then build another super Portal here and create A sub Space Corridor using Borg technology linking his universe to ours permanently. He has advanced plans to conquer this universe and on the day he opens that Super Portal all the other time lines will cease to exist. The Federation your Temporal Agency and all your civilizations will be lost and snuffed out.” Sofia paused and looked to Stephen.” All ours too Stephen your children and mine everything we know will be gone. He only needs fifty tons of Obsidian too complete his Portal and we discovered enough to do that and build his second Cosmic Portal here.”

“ But the crystals will burn out and need replacing it may not be so simple for him to maintain it on such a scale,” reasoned Toreq.

“ No.. he has adapted the Borg technology and tested it. Once built it will be a permanent Gateway and Malachi will rule Earth and this system as its ruler for Pazuzzu as he always has, as his Permanent Gatekeeper once again and as one of his trusted gods. Whilst Pazuzu and his fleet sets out to conquer all our quadrants and the entire universe that we know.”

“So where is this rift that acts as a gateway between our two universes? Can’t you just fly there and seal it?” asked Stuart.

“We suspect it’s in the outer reaches of the Gamma quadrant that’s where our long range sensors have detected bursts of Tachyion energy that matched some of the Temporal schisms however no Starfleet ship has been there,” Reasoned Branion.” It is in space well beyond what was once Dominion territory it could take us years to get there.”

“ The coordinates are in the database for the Portals computer under the Runic words for heaven of the Gods ,” stated Sofia. ”….Under the Norse title Valhalla. We have to go into to that lab open the portal and fire one or two of your Quantum torpedoes down it and seal the rift permanently. Also we have to destroy the Portal here and I am the only one who can possibly read and operate their system.”

“ No chance Sofia we would have to train you,” Stated Stuart .” I will go.”

“Yes Sofia you cannot go,” agreed Stephen who sounded shocked and concerned. ”Me and Stuart can go. You can teach him the runic code with its symbols.”

“Stuart cannot go,” said Toreq flatly but very firmly.” Stephen when you told us days ago that you had shared the information with your clever nephew we checked your family timeline. Stuart we found does indeed lead the discovery of new types of energy storage and generation using crystal technology and it will greatly help mankind overcome its many of its greenhouse gaseous problems. That is why we agreed to your course of action and transported down in the first place as we realised he could actually help us in our quest.”

“With Obsidian?” asked Stuart who couldn’t help but be curious about his own future.

“ Obsidian is too rare you rejected it eventually and experimented and found other crystals that you found you could actually manufacture and grow. They could never generate a tachyon field or pulse but they could store and help generate electricity which is what you were aiming for,” stated Toreq.” So you Stuart cannot go down and be risked, it would significantly alter the timeline instantly if anything happened.”

“ You must not!” cautioned Brannion.”It is absolutely forbidden.”

“ As I was saying before,” stated Sofa passionately. “ You can train me up on how to use their Cosmic Portal controls and it will be you and me Stephen who must transport down to California and get into the facility.”

“Then me and Toreq will go in,” reasoned Stephen.

“Toreq is a Vulcan and the woolly hat trick will not work besides which I think Malachi would be able to sense any non human he has still some telepathic ability. He may not be able to control modern human minds or read our thoughts but he could sense a non human,” Stated Sofia. “ It must be me and you Stephen and once we have secured the facility and opened the gate Toreq can transport down with the torpedoes..Brannion or Stuart will be monitoring and will operate the transporter it’s the only way it can work.”

“ I think sadly that Sofia is correct,” reasoned Brannion.” Her reasoning is most Logical.”

Stephen looked at each of his friends in turn with the hope they would disagree with Sofia and agree with him that she should stay behind on the ship.

“ I sadly concur Sofia is the only logical choice to go with you Stephen and operate the device,” confirmed Toreq almost reluctantly. ”We can train her up.”

“Hang on I thought you said you can’t transport in anyway due to the interference?” countered Stuart.” You told me you could materialise in a desk.”

“ True but we could lock on your comms devices and we could pinpoint them easily through the interference,” replied Toreq.

Branion added.” We just need 3 metres square for a man and a torpedo with its launcher.”

“ It’s a large workshop I have seen Commander Walkers footage,” commented Stephen.” We can easily do that.”

“How do you propose to get in though?” asked Toreq.

“ We will Blagg it Toreq,” chuckled Stephen. “I have done it before.”

“He or rather we shall lie and trick our way in,” added Sofia who sensed Toreq didn’t quite understand what Stephen had said.” They need Obsidian we have lots of it with the promise to be able to access enough for two of their super Cosmic Portals. We can set up a meeting between us and Malachi or his Doctor at his lab, he will want to test our obsidian and I am guessing that is where his test equipment will be. I can claim to be a geologist who has learned of the Unity Corporation interest in Obsidian and Stephen can be the person who actually discovered it. We can be asking for a very high price in cash as a down payment and that should attract their attention.”

“ We can provide you with any papers you may want,” reasoned Toreq.”We can provide you with fake backstories that will pass any enquiries and any documentation and it wouldn’t be fake but the real thing.”

Stephen though looked at Sofia,” I am still not happy about you doing this... This is going to be very dodgy and dangerous. They have already lost two experts… What about your lads?”

She shook her head,” No Stephen the real danger to my sons and your family is if we fail. If we fail we would just cease to be . Do not expect me to just do nothing! I discovered their plans! I can operate the Portal Stephen, you just have to help me get in there!”

She sounded resolute and Stephen nodded silently in agreement but then he looked at his friends solemnly each in turn.

” If this works fine that’s plan A,” he said. “ However what if it doesn’t. We need a Plan B, if we get in but fail can u teleport us out then when they activate the CTP target the site and fire the your Quantum torpedoes directly from here? That would kill Malachi, his experts and his CTP machine plus all his Obsidian.”

“ It could finally destroy their operation here,” mused Toreq.” However it would not seal the rift, the danger would still there. “

“ Not perfect but that could be Plan B,” concluded Stephen. “ However we need more back ups a plan C as well.”

“A plan C or Plan D even,” chuckled Sofia recalling Stephens past advice to her in some of the difficult times over the past year.

Stephen smiled and nodded in agreement with her,” Yes honey but for now Plan A you gotta get this thing working, we will worry about the back up plans…”

“ In the morning I can start training you on the virtual simulation programme,” Stated Toreq.”It is nearly complete.”

“ We can also start your subterfuge after we monitor the facility for any security upgrades,” reasoned Branion.” Then provide you both with new identities.”

“We can keep our own names we just need new background stories that will stand up to scrutiny,” reasoned Sofia and again Stephen nodded in agreement.

“ However I think we will need weapons and comms devices that can go through their scanners in the entrance way,” he suggested.

“ We have access to all Section 31s toys and plans and can easily replicate and modify any designs in minutes so I am sure we can help you,” stated Branion confidently.

“Don’t know about you guys but I could do with a real drink now?” stated Stuart.” Stephen ,Branion Sofia and Toreq are you up for a drink?”

“ I could do with one of your human Ales,” mused Branion.

“Could you perhaps get me that drink you introduced me too in Portrush?” asked Sofia looking at Stephen.

“Guinness with a shot of Tia Maria in it,” remembered Stephen out loud..

“Oh yeah that really sounds nice, can you do them for me and Branion too ?” asked a happy Stuart enthusiastically.

“ Can I have one of your human fruit juices?” asked Toreq.” I believe they are Pineapples and with no alcohol in it.”

Stephen grinned as he stood up,” Looks like its my round then.”

When Stephen returned with all the drinks the group of people seemed to be truly bonding into a crew and a family. Toreq seemed to be fascinated by humans and he questioned them each about where they came from and their upbringing. He was fascinated by Sofia’s tales from her childhood how she developed her love for space and her gift for languages and it was her mother who helped her fall in love with science fiction. He questioned Stephen at length about his aircraft engineering and his various adventures around the globe and finally he asked Stuart about his interest in physics and science. They in turn questioned the young Vulcan about his planet and the differences between the TV show and reality.

“ So no seven year itch?” chortled Stuart.

“Pon Farr is just fantasy,” replied the young Vulcan.” The show exaggerates certain things to stimulate audience interest I am afraid.”

“What of Surak and his teachings?” asked Sofia with a sad note of concern in her voice.” Was all that made up too?”

“Thankfully not on this they were remarkably accurate,” replied Toreq.” Surak was real and lived almost 2000 years ago. In violent dangerous times he began his teachings of wisdom Logic and how to control negative emotions that truly changed Vulcan society forever.”

“Many species on many worlds have now been influenced by his teachings, including my own people, ”agreed Branion.

“Thank goodness,” sighed Sofia gratefully.

“ You remind me of a Vulcan I saw on Star Trek,” said Stuart pointing at Sofia.

“T’pol off the series Enterprise, she was the Science Officer,” said Stephen smiling at the now embarrassed Sofia.

“Could be,” reasoned Stuart who went to get more drinks. ”Actually I thought it was a character on Voyager.”

Soon after that Stuart declared he was tired and would head back to their cabin and Toreq and Branion also took their leave. Sofia had still been nursing her first drink and Stephen asked was she tired or did she fancy one more drink.

Sofia smiled at Stephen ,” I tell you what Stephen I will have one last drink with you but lets go to the Deflector Control Room and drink them there whilst we view the orbit through the observational windows.”

“Wow now your talking,” chuckled Stephen. “That’s a great idea honey, you truly are a genius and I am going to have to hang on to you…”

Once they got their drinks the two of them left the galley and went down the corridor to the Deflector Control Room and inside Sofia remembered how to activate the control. When she activated it the wall panels slide away and the magnificent view was revealed. Stephen went to some of the chairs at the crew stations and relieved them of their cushions then arranged the four cushions at the centre of huge transparent viewing window.

“ Shall we sit whilst we enjoy the view?” he said waving to the nest he had created .

Sofia handed Stephen her drink whilst she sat down then he placed both drinks on the floor in front of them and he sat down beside her.

“My god it’s really beautiful,” She laughed. “I find it hard sometimes to find the correct words in English Stephen.”

Stephen chuckled,” You speak English so well I usually forget your Russian.”

“ You were meant to be learning,” chided Sofia playfully as she reached for her drink.

“You were meant to be teaching me,” countered Stephen equally playfully.

Sofia just smiled as she looked at the panoramic view below of the west coast of the United States and the outline of California. It was now near dusk and you could see the lights of LA the roads and up north along the highway to San Francisco. This view alone makes it worth it she looked around her and the shiny white surface of the control room appeared a reddish colour now as the lights reflected from the earth.

“ Oh my ,” she cooed.” Its wonderful Stephen its almost ….Crimson…”

Stephen knew what Sofia was referring too as he had read the Books she had told him about, the books that had affected her or the ones that had led to her love of science fiction.

“Crimson Sails,” said Stephen quietly to Sofia. ”You thought of yourself as Soll and here is the huge Crimson Ship that has come to take you away Sofia, just like you always dreamed about when you were younger and when you were lonely.”

Sofia looked at Stephen and smiled,” You remembered…”

Stephen nodded,” Of course I did. It moved me when you described how you felt lonely as Soll did in the story.. you told me you loved the tale.”

“..and like the Story,” she sighed.” You brought me here.”

“ So tell me Sofia where did the whole Vulcan Vegan philosophy thing come from,” asked Stephen who was still trying to understand his new companion.

“ It was nearly six years ago now,” sighed Sofia. “When my mother passed, I took it badly… I felt guilty… I was drowning my sorrows… drinking too much…yet I knew I had to find something else. Then I read Leonard Nimoys book…” I am Spock” and how he dealt with his problems. It was like voila and yes it showed me I didn’t have to always blame myself and there were other ways… I turned a new leaf Stephen.”

“I am so glad you told me that Sofia, it explains a lot and Let’s hope this story our story here has a happy ending,” mused Stephen softly.

“ Tomorrow we can worry Stephen, “she gently cautioned him.” Let’s just enjoy this wonderful moment when our dreams actually came true.”

Stephen nodded and looked out at the wonderful view of California below in darkness but still lit up by a million streetlights and car headlights as they drove along the Freeways It was amazing too see and if you looked slightly beyond you could see the distant stars in space.

“ It is amazing,” he sighed.” I wanted to take you here to California. To Monsterpalooza the big convention in Pasadena. To take you to the Hollywood studios then go to San Francisco and of course the big star Trek Convention in Las Vegas. I wanted to take you on the Xtra Terrestrial Road tour from Vegas to Rosewell and Area 51 and now here we are doing it for real…”

Sofia slowly slid closer to Stephen and leaned against him, Stephen without realising it wrapped his left arm around her and they both sat contentedly taking in the beautiful sights below. After several minutes Stephen sighed , “ you do know everything led you here. Your grandmothers love of all things Celtic your mother who instilled a love of sci fi with Aelita and that Teacher Galina who became your friend got you into translating..”

“ And my love of Star Trek cos playing and being on Facebook it all led me to meet a daft Irishman,” Teased Sofia gently.

Stephen Looked at her,” He is now entirely your Daft Irishman Sofia.”

She smiled warmly at him,” I think it’s like you keep saying…. Serendipity…and yes you’re my daft Irishman… Your my Stephen.”

She then put her now empty glass back down and sighed,” I could sit her all night Stephen but I am getting tired …”   
“ and tomorrow you have to learn how to become a Cosmic Time Portal Operator,” mused Stephen sadly. “A busy day….”

Sofia then leaned in and kissed Stephen very gently at first and he was happy. Stephen expected her to break away but she didn’t. They kissed tenderly gently as their lips met and then with a growing passion, Stephens arms wrapped around her and she seemed to melt into them. To Stephen she tasted and smelt and felt …perfect.

Eventually she broke off and sighed,” We better go….”

“ There are plenty of other empty cabins,” chuckled Stephen.

“I doubt I would get much sleep if we did that Stephen,” she said in her best mock Vulcan voice.” To our own bunks I think, after we tidy up here.”

Chapter 7

The next morning Stephen woke, rolled over and sure enough as usual he could see Sofia was up before him and gone already. Across the semi lit cabin he could see and hear the gentle contented sound of Stuart snoring as usual. He smiled and getting up he remade his bed and went to the bathroom where he shaved then showered before going back to the main room and got dressed in his dark jeans and Star Trek Discovery t shirt and after pulling on his favourite black desert boots he quickly and quietly went to the Galley. Sure enough Sofia was in her cosplay Vulcan outfit but this was red and she was sitting by Toreq.

Stephen ordered toast at the replicator and fruit juice then joined them sitting beside Sofia on the large oval table.

“ How are my two favourite Vulcans this morning ?” he jokingly enquired.” Did you both sleep well.”

“ I find mediation before I sleep always works for me,” stated Toreq.

“ I slept well but woke early ,” sighed Sofia.” You however were asleep within minutes of lying down. I went to bid you goodnight but you were already asleep.”

“Sorry but I always sleep easily and after three Guinness with Tia Marias,” Chuckled Stephen. ”Well that was a no brainer.”

Sofia smiled ,”It is nice but two is my limit whilst we are here I think.”

Toreq rose and took his plate and mug to the cleaning station,” If you are done Sofia we should make a move as we have lots to do today.”

She nodded and stood up but before she left she bent over and kissed Stephen on the cheek,” I will see you soon.”

Stephen smiled and nodded,” I will eat here then wake Stuart and see you both shortly in the lab ok?”

Sofia placed her used plate and mug in the disposal machine and activated the cleaning cycle then after winking at Stephen the slim Russian language translator in her shiny red one piece Trek outfit followed Toreq out of the Galley. They walked the short distance down the central corridor past the bridge to the Science Laboratory. Once in Toreq led her to his workstation and began to pull up on the screens and transfer over to Sofia’sscreens the computer simulation of all the control panels for the Cosmic Time Portal or CTP as Stuart had started to refer to it.

“ Whilst I carry out the last tweeks to the programme you can start translating and learning the runic symbols on the keypads and controls Sofia,” Stated Toreq.” You will have to be able to do it eventually without references and almost instantly.”

Sofia nodded then returned to her own workstation and since she had translated the other Runic texts earlier she was glad she was able to recognise half the symbols instantly and automatically. The others she checked against the database she had uploaded but she jotted them down on a old fashioned notepad with a old fashioned pen. She saw Toreq was amused by this.

“ I still find that by writing some things down it is easier to commit them to memory,” She explained to the young Vulcan.

“ it is no different in the 24th century. I used hand written notes in the Vulcan Science Academy for my coursework and it makes me happy to see we across the species divide we all have this in common.”

Sofia smiled at this knowledge and then turned back to her work and tried to concentrate. Last night with her crewmates in the galley learning about each other and bonding had been fun. Then going to the Deflector Control Room and sitting with Stephen and looking down on the planet below had been wonderful. She promised herself they should do that again, it had been amazing a culmination of all her dreams and she enjoyed sharing it with Stephen. However she knew she had to put that out of her mind and concentrate now like a Vulcan and suppress her other thoughts and emotions.

She hardly noticed when Stephen Stuart and Branion joined them in the Lab but after a time she was able to recognise all the runic symbols on the computer controls and understand their meaning without thinking. It was only when Toreq approached her and said they were ready and Stuart would introduce her to the virtual programme. He with Branion and Stephen were going to jump the ship forward in time to see if any security upgrades had been made to the Melkorne facility after Commander Walkers operation.

Stuart smiled at Sofia and offered her the lightweight goggles and the ear piece and warned her, “ It can make you dizzy at first so just standstill and take it all in at first then when you get used to it and remember you don’t have to physically move just think about moving and you will.. Trust me you will get used to it and we have included a handy tablet with all the info you need to know and the instructions on how it works in the simulation. You will see it on the desk by the controls it is bright blue… and that tablet was my idea .”

Sofia smiled “Stephen was right you are very clever Stuart.”

“ I just thought it would be easier,” reasoned Stuart. “Otherwise you would have to keep going in and out of the simulation to refer to things..I even included on the tablet that runic codex alphabet you uploaded if you can’t remember it all straight away.”

“Hopefully I won’t need it but thanks,” she replied as she put the earpiece in and the goggles on and she felt so excited and a little scared.”

“Ok close your eyes and open them on the count of three as I activate it Sofia and you will see the CTP in one …two…three….open them.”

Sofia slowly opened her eyes and felt slightly giddy at first as she now appeared to be in a large well lit workshop with at one end a ramp onto a plinth that on either side of it perhaps 4 metres apart were the two large C shaped transmitters She looked at them and she could see they had many of the obsidian crystals mounted on their surface and beyond them and to the side stacked on top of each other were rows and rows of Super Capacitor Pyramids as Stephen had described them. Of course Stuart now called them the SCPs and that name like his naming the Cosmic Time Portal the CTP had also stuck.

“ Can you see the Controls?” She heard Stuart ask her.

She looked and saw the controls and computers that lay to one side of the ramp but were surrounded by more banks of SCPs and other computers and equipment.

“Just think about walking over slowly ,” said Stuart.” You don’t have to move your feet just think about it …gently,”

Sofia did and for an instant lifted her foot but then she relaxed and in her mind she imagined walking over and in this virtual world she did… “Wow that feels so weird.”

“ I know,” giggled Stuart. ”But don’t worry you will soon relax into it…I want one of these at home, its ace!”

She tried to concentrate and be serious but she smiled and found it hard not to laugh at this magical experience.

“Oh my.. it is strange but wonderful.” said Sofia as she now more confidently in her mind walked over to the main computer console and that’s also what happened in the virtual simulation which appeared so real.

“ Can you see the Desk by it and the tablet?” asked Stuart who could see exactly what She could see on one of his computer screens whilst on another he had a overhead view of the workshop with Sofia in it and another he had other images and it all resembled a intricate computer based internet Game set up .

” Well pick the Tablet up its just like the tablet you had originally and turn it on. It has instructions to turn on and operate the CTP in English now thanks to your wonderful translations. I simplified some of them as Toreqs original were much too like Vulcanesse.”

“Is that a real word?” asked Sofia as she picked up and activated the tablet and it was so weird as she could see her hands move and feel the tablet but none of it was real and it was all virtually simulated.

“ Vulcanesse is when Toreq and his Vulcans overcomplicate ideas and instructions and we have to simplify things and yes I invent new words and stuff all the time,” chortled Stuart. “ Ok Sofia scroll through the pages and lets turn the CTP on.”

Sofia did as she was told and on the tablet found the instructions which luckily came with diagrams she then went to the largest control panel and to one side was a bank of switches and she found the one which runes said Main power and flicked it. It was strange as she could actually feel the switch move as she flicked it, even though she hadn’t moved or even touched anything..

“ Now the other Power switches,” added Stuart gently.

“ It feels weird,” she sighed.

“ I know ,” replied Stuart as Sofia correctly read the correct runic symbols by memory and turned the power on the associated consoles.

“ Ok you have to wait one minute as they all do self test Bite checks on themselves so Sofia just relax and when they are done the computer screens should all come too life and a green light will appear above each of the keypads to say its all ok to go,” advised Stuart.

She paused and watched as the various computer screens came to life showing all sorts of pictures displays and one by one the green lights came on.

“ Remember Sofia there 6 consoles and you want 6 green lights before we go on.” “We have all six now,” noted Sofia after a time.

“Ok then read the next step ,” advised Stuart. “We go to the first console which is the power supply and monitoring console. We need it to transfer the power from the fusion reactor, monitor it, then feed it through our SCPs. Once the power is built up in the SCPs its job is done and it is then redundant ok .”

Sofia scrolled down and read the instructions on the virtual tablet then approached the first console and tapped in the access code using the runic script. At times she had to pause to remember the translation but she did it correctly.

“ This is your first time relax Sofia you will get faster,” enthused Stuart.” You’re doing really good”

Sofia sighed and silently hoped so, as she felt she was going far too slow. Then as if he read her mind Stuart added,” Its good to go slow and get it right on your first attempt Sofia ….you’re doing great.”

Sofia followed the instructions and Stuarts advice and activated the power supply and transfer from the nearby fusion reactor then she correctly monitored it as she increased it to 1.53 mega watts. As per the instructions once she could see the power supply was within parameters using the screens and stable Stuart moved her on the next stage. She moved to the next two consoles and activated the banks upon banks of the interconnected SCPs and started to bring them online. She was amazed to see as they became activated the each had a little blue light that at first flickered and then came on. She had to check as the power levels rose and there was a imperceptible hum in the air.

“It feels so real now,” she gasped. ”I can feel it and hear it too..it’s amazing.”

“Ok check the power Sofia always keep an eye on the Power.” advised Stuart

Sofia checked the readouts and luckily they used normal numbering and watched as quickly all the SCP’s came online and the Blue lights on each came to life. She watched the power build up and gasped at the readings.

“ We are now at 15 Trillion mega watts,” she gasped.

“That’s far more power than this ship can generate,” confirmed Stuart. “Toreq reckons it might be able to produce even more but basically it’s a small sun Sofia. To reach the Rift and the Valhalla site it will have to exceed 25 Trillion megawatts.”

“ I get it,” Sighed Sofia. Who slowly scanned all the power supply figures and found she was beginning to read the runic words on the screens easier now.” Its steady now.”

“Ok nowi go to the next console,” advised Stuart.” This is the targeting or navigation Console and you can search for a new target for the Portal or go for a preselected one. I would Imagine the target Valhalla gate in the mirror universe will be practically top of the preselected list. This is only a simulation but they did include two practise CTP simulations each one consists of six sets of co-ordinates to pinpoint where its going and a time co-ordinate which narrows it down to One hundredth of a second. Also notice Sofia on the main display in the top right hand corner is always the present time for the Valhalla CTP.”

“So that’s the time I would enter for the Valhalla CTP?” queried Sofia.

“That’s our best guess” reasoned Stuart. “ So do you want to enter one of our Two practise targets.”

Sofia took a deep breath and nodded,” Ok here goes.”

It took her some time to find and enter all the correct information and several times both her and Stuart both had to pause and discuss the best way forward. However after a number of attempts the Controls finally accepted her target coordinates and recognised them as legitimate. When it did a series of green lights flickered and came on over on the last two control stations. On another screen appeared a map of the universe which zoomed in to where the CTP was aiming at and in this case it was a distant moons surface in the Alpha quadrant of the milky way galaxy.

“ How many people do you think normally operate this machine?” asked Sofia.

“Commander Walker found three people in the control room when he arrived and the gate was in operation so I guess that’s how it is but Sofia with practise you will get it,” reasoned Stuart. “Now move to the next control Panel Sofia that activates the actual CTP and the last one is a monitoring panel.”

Sofia moved across and studied the control activating panel and with Stuart she ran through its controls and found she was now reading the runic symbols easily now. When she activated the panel she could see the Obsidian Crystals on the two Arc shaped Transmitters on the raised platform began to glow a faint blueish colour. She could also hear now a almost menacing electronic rhythmic beat that repeated itself over and over and sent a shiver down her spine.

“That sound…its chilling,” she thought aloud.

Stuart chuckled,” We have no idea if there is any sound at all I added that just to make it seem more real . I downloaded it from the BBC sound effects lab. It’s called the Heartbeat of a Dalek.”

Sofia chuckled,” you boys love your Doctor Who… However it does add to my sense of dread Stuart…so its working.”

She followed the instructions on her virtual tablet and with Stuart talking her through it she slowly prepped the CTP .

“Ok we are there…I think “ she announce nervously.

“ It looks good,” agreed Stuart. ”Activate it…”

She hit the switch that had the runic symbols which indicated the transmit message and she noticed the Dalek heartbeat died away and a humming noise took over as the two transmitters on the platform glowed a brighter blue. Then a flash occurred and Blue oval pool of glowing light filled the area between the transmitters about 14ft across and perhaps 10 feet high. It seemed to shimmer and looked a lot like the grainy pictures that Commander Walker had sent back.

“ You Did it! Well done Sofia!” laughed Stuart.

“ Wow its amazing,” gasped Sofia who was relieved she had successfully done it.

“ Ok we will do that again and get it done quicker,” said Stuart. ”That took us just over an hour we have to get it down a lot quicker than that. We will use the other set of co-ordinates we have and then after that we can give you a few problems to solve.”

“Stuart I am not sure I can cope with that,” said Sofia who was astounded at how complex this CTP and its machinery was.

“You will ace it and I will talk you through it. .Relax you’re a natural,” said Stuart to reassure her. “ Now close your eyes and I will deactivate the programme then we can start over.”

Sofia did this and they began over again and then again and again and she did find she was picking it up easier each time. Only occasionally did Stuart have to help her and he was giving her more information on how it all worked. She learned that for smaller jumps like from LA to somewhere else on earth even in different time periods it would only take a few seconds for a person or a thing to travel the distance. She learned this travel time was indicated when the target was collected and the jump to the moon in the Alpha Quadrant would have taken just over a minute. The jump to the second one was to the 24th century and was in the Vulcan system and would take nearly 3 minutes and luckily the texts told them the jump to the Valhalla CTP would take nearly 8 minutes. Which meant given the portal remained open for 14 minutes and 47 seconds they could only use the portal on that jump for the first 6 minutes and 47 seconds. Sofia learned and could see there was also a timer on the machine showing how long they could safely use the CTP for as the time ran inexorably down. Anyone entering the Portal after this time would not make it through and be dissolved and lost to time.

Stuart then had Sofia use the CTP and he ran her through some known problems the Texts had warned about and the solutions it had offered. This included a failure of some crystals in some of the SCPs before the CTP was activated and even when it was open. They were able to switch other spare SCPs online to take over and maintain the operation. There were other known scenarios that Stuart ran her through and Sofia slowly began too absorb and remember them. She learned that once the Portal was fully opened most of the control panel were redundant only the Scp’s mattered and could affect its operation.

“ On the day we might be able to establish a proper coms link into the facility so I can talk you through it,” Reasoned Stuart. “Toreq reckons now we can adjust for the Neutrino and Tachyon radiation so we should be able too. When Commander Walker went in we didn’t know about them and that’s why he couldn’t establish a two way normal link. However we have to be prepared for the fact that you will be on your own with just you and Stephen Sofia, but I will also run him through this operation too. However only you can read the Runic control symbols so it will be you in charge telling him what to do..ok?”

Later Toreq appeared and told them to come too lunch and they joined the rest of their crewmates in the Galley and everyone was keen to learn how Sofia had made such good progress.

“ She is a natural,” said Stuart enthusiastically.

“ I did tell you so?” remarked Stephen proudly.

Sofia tried to hide her embarrassment,” It is still too slow…I think it will take a lot more practise. It is truly mind blowing.”

“ We are down to thirty minutes now it just needs more practice, each time you got quicker and more natural,” reasoned Stuart.

Sofia keen to switch the attention away from herself so she turned to Stephen and asked ,” What did you learn?”

“They upped the security detail there are now six outside and four inside 24 hours a day on four hour shifts and another two teams patrolling the grounds with dogs. Toreq adjusted the scanners and we can see two figures outside the lab doors and reckon these are guards plus the two on the entrance . Then there is four outside the entrance and two at the rear so we couldn’t fight our way in, we have to be invited in…” said Stephen. ”We will have to Blagg it to get inside Sofia.”

“To that end we have been created a new story for us Sofia,” he added. “ You are now Doctor Sofia Ivanov who studied Geology and in Languages a St Petersburg State University and you’re a qualified Professor. We have inserted your picture and glowing details into the university database but it will only appear to anyone specifically searching for you from outside. I have also created a few entries on the various social media networks so anyone from the Unity Corporation will find you as a legit figure and a private but successful geology expert. You have been acting a freelance consultant for a string of firms and recently you have been at Queens University in Ireland helping on a research Programme. This programme is a legit Programme being run by the famous Professor Stuart Mccloughlin into materials that can be used for energy storage and generation. In fact our Stuart since he is in on this timeline can in 2051 help us and back up your credentials..”

“Wait can we do this?” queried Sofia.” Does that not break some time ruling.. your Temporal Prime directive?”

“Hell I am up for it ,” said Stuart enthusiastically.

“Well without revealing too much to our Stuart, we and he knows his research if applies himself will be successful,” reasoned Stephen. ” We know he will study the uses for Obsidian and other Crystals for power generation. He will have papers published and so the Unity Corporation we know is aware of his expert knowledge on the subject just as Toreq and Branion knew. I did a search on their database for scientific studies they have checked out on their search engine and Stuarts name has popped up several times. They are following anyone who shows an interest in crystal power generation. So we can ask our Stuart now to help us later in 2051 if any one contacts him about you Sofia or his cousin Stephen Mccloughlin. He can say we are legit you are a genius but I am also clever but a bit of the black sheep of the family.”

“I am happy to help now or in 2051,” chuckled Stuart.

“ Is this ok to do,” asked Sofia looking to Brannion. ” Doesn’t this break a Prime Directive or something else.?”

Branion shrugged,” It does not directly break our rules but it is a different way of interpreting them, a clever subterfuge and one I admit we may not have thought of. You 21st century humans seem to be as devious as any Ferengi diplomat or trader.”

Sofia was not sure what to say as Stephen carried on,”…We have your cv on their website at Queens University, also at St Pete’s as well as several other companies we used on your cv. We have new passports and plenty of other documents to back this story up Niki oh and bank accounts for you in Russia and in the uk . We also made a false email account in your name on the Queens Uni website news section were you announced a discovery of large quantity of Obsidian deposits had been found at a undisclosed location. We had this email and a blog referring to it put on their public forum it will only appear to people from outside the university and we have made sure it was highlighted to the Unity Corporation.”

“Within a day a rep from the Corporation sought you out and asked for any details and did you know how much Obsidian there was and the quality of the deposits, “ Said Stephen to Sofia enthusiastically. “ We time slipped back two weeks ago to start this conversation and they have jumped at our bait.”

“ You made it clear the guy who made the discovery is interested in financial gain and is naturally suspicious but we hinted you would be happy too help if the reward was enough and a career opening with a company such as the Unity Corporation was possible. You also state the obsidian seemed exceptionally high quality and there was supposedly up to 300 tons in the deposit at least. You made it clear both you and the guy who made the discovery were aware the price of Obsidian had gone through the roof and it was the Unity Corporation that was driving that price increase. Obsidian is now worth twice the price of gold and a kilogramme of Obsidian is worth over a hundred thousand dollars . Our fifty crystals are worth nearly two million of their dollars easily..”

“ Oh my,” gasped Sofia.” You have been busy..”

“It’s handy having a time ship at your disposal,” chuckled Stephen.” Also we know as Commander Walker broke the Unity Corporations website security they emailed Doctor Kamen. He told them within minutes not only to offer you what you want but he wanted you to be invited to bring him samples over here in Pasadena for testing. We can read all their internal emails too…”

“ You replied that you and me who discovered the deposits while be willing to bring a sample batch off up to fifty crystals out for testing and we sent pictures of them to prove it. However you informed them that I would want a want a healthy up front bonus for agreeing to come over. Also That I was suspicious and wanted to be there in person to observe any testing on my crystals and I was not happy dealing with any junior flunkies.”

“They replied straight way to say Doctor Kamen himself would do the testing and he would want us too come to his Energy Research laboratory. Not only that but the Unity Corporation President Malachi Uttick would be happy to meet us and they have offered to transfer Four hundred thousand dollars as a thank you and to cover any expenses.,” said Stephen who was now smiling proudly.

“Wow ,” exclaimed Sofia.” It is working and they are falling for our bait.”

“Hook line and sinker my Sofia,” chuckled Stephen.

“ It is what they most needed,” mused Toreq.”They are desperate for suitable Obsidian.”

“And what’s your backstory then ?” Sofia asked of Stephen.

“I was a aircraft engineer as per normal but my family owns land in Ireland on the North Antrim coast and I had several businesses registered in my name one of which was selling locally found Irish metals and mineral curiosities crystals etc. online. Its only a small operation but we gave it a decent turnover and a real website so it looks legit and a way in. I am a cousin of the Professor Stuart Mccloughlin and that is how we met and I worked out Obsidian could be worth money and unlike Professor Mccloughlin I don’t care about the university research…. I am after the money. It will look and sound legit to them I hope.”

“ What if they try and contact you?” asked Sofia.

“We have thought of that,” observed Branion.” Stephen had some suggestions I believe we can use…I think.”

“I have recorded a really dull tele answering service that would bore anyone ringing it to death and we have to get you to do the same Sofia,” added Stephen. ”At some point your going to have to speak to them…don’t worry though we will have to prepare a script. I will tell them u accept their offer and send them your bank details. We will say you will contact them once the travel arrangements are made but it should be within days of the money being transferred. We will be alerted if they contact my answering service and can do the same with yours once we have set it up…. It is easy.”

“So what is next?” asked Sofia.

“Branion and I are going to replicate some kit we can use and I am going to learn all I can about LA and Pasadena in 2051,” replied Stephen. “ We need clothes money luggage and everything that fits this timeline here and now.”

“You will pick my clothes? “queried Sofia in her best mock Vulcan tone.

“I will look up what’s on offer and you can pick for yourself,” countered Stephen.

“That is acceptable then,” she replied in her mock T’pol voice.

“ You can Practise with Toreq now Sofia,” said Stuart.”Branion is going to show me how the transporters work that way I can man them when Toreq teleports down to you guys with the photon Torpedo armed with that Quantum warhead.”

Stuart could see Sofia looked worried and smiled warmly ,” Don’t worry you are doing ace. Stephen was right and you’re a true genius. Also do not forget this is all new to us as well, I was learning just as much as you were…It’s even new to Toreq as well.”

“ Have we enough time too spare though to learn it all,” she wondered aloud.

“ Lucky we are on a time ship then ,,” quipped Stephen gently.

Toreq then looked over to Sofia and she knew he was ready and as he slowly stood he asked of her,” shall we begin?”

Sofia smiled and standing up once more followed the Vulcans lead cleaning up their plates and cups then heading to the Science Lab to continue more of her training. Stephen soon followed them but went his station and activating the computers he began to pull up all the information on life in Present day 2051 earth and Los Angeles . He had the ships computer access the current news and information streaming services that many of the people below used in their everyday life. He made a point of looking at advertisements to get an idea of how money was used and was surprised to see both coins and paper money had made a comeback in the last few years. It’s use had nearly fizzled out but thanks to the internet wars recently a lot of the online money services that internet terror organisations had crippled time and time again were no longer trusted. Paper money and coinage was back and although inflation had seen for instance the dollar only to be now worth 10% of what it had been his own time. It had been revalued as the new dollar and under this new currency things probably costed twice on paper what they did in his own time.

People had mobile phones but these projected their own Holo type screens above them which when activated these screens could be small or enlarged to become as large as an old fashioned tv screen in your home. So the old fashioned Televisions were now history. Stephen made a note of the two most common and better types and uploaded all the parameters about them so he could get Branion to later replicate them. Cars were now all electric but the very rich and the Police had hover cars that could drive along the highway or fly, though private hover cars used IT auto guidance and could only fly along predetermined routes. T o leave these routes they had to hover along normal roads at road level. The city of Los Angeles which Stephen had loved to visit had always been a city of the haves and have nots. Now this was even more so, there were large areas of the city that resembled the old Brazilian Favelas slums at their very worst in his days. Most of the cities upper and middle classes lived totally walled off completely isolated from the poor masses in Designated Regulated Zones.

So Pasadena which was still a upmarket area and of course as a home to Caltech and the Unity corporations headquarters it was totally sealed off and protected. The Unity Corporations and City employees or affluent people who could live there , lived a idyllic lifestyle. Protected by the unity Corporations City of Pasadena Police Department and they could still access other safe areas of LA, guarded by the heavily armed Unity Corp Force who controlled and patrolled the City Freeways. It reminded Stephen of the Sci Fi movie Bladerunner as outside of these heavily protected Regulated zones with their interconnected heavily protected and patrolled freeway access routes life was cheap dirty and could be very savage.

The non-regulated zones where most people lived were patrolled by flying Drones or heavily armoured cars that resembled Military assault wagons with turreted weapons systems and of course this was run by the Unity corporation on behalf of the city of Los Angeles. Over two million people were homeless and lived in tent cities in waste lands that had food and basic supplies provided by the city via of course the Unity Corporation. Each day those of them who could, queued for jobs labouring for the city or Unity Corporation various building projects. Stephen noted there were several other large Corporations that controlled swathes of the city and the state of California But Malachi Uticks Corporation was by far the biggest.

Yet because he owned and ran several of the largest free to access Streaming news and entertainment networks Malachi Uttick was painted by many as a modern day Messiah . He provided jobs, fed the poor ,provided basic free healthcare education and his new fusion reactor could help save mankind. Too many he was a saviour but on some smaller independent streaming services he was not so revered and one or two labelled him as a out and out fascist Oligarch . However these were small independent stations that always seemed to be getting closed down before starting up again using different names elsewhere. Yet for all his free streaming services and food for the masses and supposed employment measures both crime and rioting were rampant throughout the cites non regulated Zones. On any given night there were Protests and marches through the zones and rioting often breaking out in different parts of the city.

Stephen also searched the Los Angeles streaming channels for what people were wearing both casually and for business wear and he downloaded various images so he could show Sofia later and see if they could reproduce some. Certainly casual fashion hadn’t changed much and most of what he brought would still be accepted .He looked at everything and was happy to see there were hotels in Pasadena and one he had even stayed at before was inside the regulated Zone and recommended . In such an area in the City of Pasadena centre there were restaurants Bars parks and sports stadiums etc.. so the wealthy and fortunate could enjoy a good life. Stephen was also happy to see one of his favourites restaurants he had used in the past and liked was still going strong.

He then noticed the weather had changed, Stephen had always remembered LA as always being a very dry sunny city as the Dry Santa Anna winds had swept north westwards across the deserts and the city then out to the Pacific. However with climate change now for much of the summer the winds were instead sucked in from the Pacific ocean bringing in a lot of moisture and at times very heavy rainfall to the once dry city. This had been caused by the now higher average temperatures inland causing low pressure in the east to suck the now moist air from the pacific coasts. He wondered could he record this information and play it back to the climate sceptics in his own time, but realised Branion would probably throw a fit and he quietly chuckled. In all his previous trips to LA he had never seen it rain before ever.

When Branion returned with Stuart, Stephen got him to set both him and Sofia up with credit cards and to ensure they had plenty of money on them and in then he also had him replicate actual cash too. He showed Brannion the Pens and mobiles he had selected and Branion uploaded their specifications to the ships computer. Branion was confident he could adapt these so they might also accommodate some of Section 31s gadgetry and could pass unnoticed through the scanners the Melkorne were using at the entrance to the laboratory facility.

“There is a possibility they may not allow the phones into the labs at all,” reasoned Stephen to the portly Betazoid officer,” so we need a back up for everything, always have a Plan A then a plan B , C and even a Plan D if needs be .”

Branion nodded in agreement,” Absolutely Stephen I can get on that immediately and I will go to the armoury, the replicators there specialises in that.”

Stephen carried on monitoring The Unity corporations headquarters and its labs as well as scanning for more news about Malachi Uttick. Sofia also carried on improving her knowledge of how to operate the CTP and she was getting quicker all the time and even coping now with most of the problems Toreq deliberately tested her with.

After several hours a buzzer sounded and Toreq went over to the comms device on the wall and spoke with Branion briefly.

When done he turned to the others and said,” The lieutenant has completed the devices you need and wants me to bring you both Stephen and Sofia to the Armoury so you can get used to them. He reckons it would be a good break anyway.”

Stephen smiled and pretended to playfully punch the air, “Yes!! We get to play with weapons.. at last real phasors.”

“Well I am coming too,” reasoned Stuart.” I am not letting you two have all the fun.”

Sofia rolled her eyes in mock despair but then smiled.

“ Boys and their toys,” she chuckled.

Stephen looked at her quizzically, “ Don’t tell me you’re not excited…I know Sofa you own your very own Klingon Bat’leth .. and at least two replica phasors don’t you?.”

“ok your right,” replied Sofia who then smiled and giggled as she playfully took Stephens hand as they followed Toreq out of the lab.

They then walked back down the main corridor and to a door opposite the transporter room and entered the ships armoury and Stephen Sofia and Stuart were all impressed. On a wall opposite were mounted a range of weapons various hand pistols and some bulkier assault rifle looking types as well as other devices they could only guess what their purpose might be. The room also had the usual computer stations two larger than normal replicators, also work benches and tool racks and Tooling Role cabs. It was over twenty metres long and at one end on the far wall were various targets so it obviously doubled as a practise firing and testing range as well. Near the replicator by a long workbench was Branion and he was looking very smug and pleased with himself.

“ Well then what have you got for us?” asked Stephen playfully of the Portly ships navigator and who was now the ships commander and armouer.

Branion stepped away from the bench and they could see two cell phones that were commonly in use in the LA of 2051. Though they were of different makes next to them were two pens one black and chunky and the other silver and slim then there were two plain rings one gold and the other one was silver. Branion picked up the phones to show them.

“They are normal phones however when you dial 001 you open up a comms link to us on the ship. It will register as just a phone on any scanner anywhere in the universe and is only activated when you squeeze the side panels and you feel a click. When activated the screen shows a discrete green indicator light. I have used all of Section 31’s files and secret database to make these more suitable to our purpose.”

Branion picked up the phones and showed them the discrete side panels and let them activate them..” and if you squeeze them gently again till you feel a click as they deactivate.”

He then took them too a bench down by the range and on it were mounted various locks steel plates and heavy duty hinges. The metal plates were arranged to be side to side almost touching like a door joint. Brannion took the phones back and picking up the first he activated it by squeezing the sidepanels he then pointed it at the wall at the end of the range.

“Once I have activated it only then does its power scource become live and if you press the number one it fires a stun burst and it will continue to fire that burst as long as I hold it down. It could take down one of your large Terran elephant creatures at around 200 metres and keep it unconscious for 30 of your minutes a humanoid would be knocked out for a day or more. If I then press 2 it will fire a kill shot again it could take down one of your elephants. Then if I press 3 and hold it will go into fuse mode and you can instantly fuse and melt metal and again you must hold it down to use it. Then finally if you press 4 the phone changes its configuration and it then becomes a powerful electromagnet once activated you place it where you want and then press the mute button and in ten seconds it activates.

Also if you get in trouble and activate it discreetly we can home in on you even inside the lab and we can emergency transport you out.. You can also place it on a suitable spot for us to transport down onto whilst speaking to us on the other cell phone.”

“How long will it last?” asked Nikita.

“The phones lasts a week on a charge but once it is activated that will go down to around 72 hours,” he replied.

“ How many shots does that give us in that time?” asked Stephen.

“Unlimited in that time,” stated Branion. “ You must each pick one and get used to it as your lives could depend on it.”

“And what of plan B if they do not allow our phones into the Lab?” asked Stephen.

Branion smiled and pointed to the pens and rings, ”Could you pass me those Toreq?”

Branion made sure the phones were deactivated and putting them down on the bench he accepted the pens.

“ They both function as pens and the power source only activates when you push down and turn the top half ninety degrees and you feel a click then point and squeeze the clip which is now the trigger and it will fire a stun shot as good as the cell phone keep it held down and it turns too fuse mode. To fire a kill shot push the clip forward as you squeeze and to return to pen mode push the top back and it will spring back to normal mode.”

As Branion said this he showed them all how to do each of the settings..

“ Has this got any limits?” asked Sofia.

Branion nodded ,” yes due to the size it has around a two hundred shot capacity.”

“That’s more than enough,” reasoned Stephen.

“And the rings?” asked Sofia.

Branion put the pens on the bench and nodded to Toreq who passed him the rings.

“You may pick whichever you wish to use but they are actually a discrete comms device. One has a circle inscribed on it the other a star squeeze those and it activates the power scource until then they cannot be detected once activated they allow two way comms with us even through the interference and we can track you. We will be able to hear everything you hear but only you can hear us so this will be ideal for this undercover mission. So we can use this and could transport you out in a emergency and you can use one as a marker for us to safely transport to but once activated they can remain on for up to 72 hours,” said Branion who then added,” and I can alter the sizes to fit you both anytime.”

“That’s Plan B then,” mused Stephen.” If we fail and can’t activate the device or transport you down….What then is plan C?”

“We would transport you out by emergency transport ,” answered Branion.” Then we lay waste to the site from orbit using our ships phasors and normal Photon Torpedoes. It would still leave the Cosmic rift open but it would destroy his CTP and prevent Pazuzzu having any access to the Obsidian and the Earth, it would totally derail his plans and also kill Malachi his gatekeeper.”

“ Now can we play with the toys ?” pleaded Stuart with a mock air of desperation.

After that the next few hours was the most fun that any of them had had in years as they each played with and used the devices as Brannion first ran through with them each again in turn showing them again what to do. However very soon they were firing stun and kill shots at targets on the wall and melting and fusing the locks and plates or hinges on the benches with the Section 31 cell phones and the pens. Sofia found it thrilling to use these weapons that before she had only imagined and to everyone’s delight including her own she proved a very good shot. Stephen as expected as a ex-military man took to the weapons easily and also showed he was a excellent shot whilst Stuart was like a excited kid at his first funfair. Though as well as using the weapons Stephen and Sofia had to get used to using the cell phones as normal cell phones and getting used to handling them naturally and at that point Branion showed how they could recharge them back in once back in their quarters.

“ Has anyone any questions about our plans or equipment?” asked Brannion.

“ What effect will a kill shot or one of these stun shots really have on the Melkorne who inhabit the human hosts body?” asked a worried Stuart who was now voicing out loud a fear he had shared privately with Stephen.

Everyone looked to Sofia who had studied the historical texts and was now their expert on their deadly Melkorne foe.

“ They can die too and also be incapacitated, “ she said.” Once these ascended beings after inhabiting a host for many years have too leave that dying host, they need to prepare themselves to leave and transfer to a new host. If they are unprepared or if it is sudden they can themselves perish or be seriously injured… If the host body is unexpectedly destroyed or incapacitated then they can be as well…Pazuzzo and Malachi have killed many of their own fellow Melkorne Rivals by swift summary executions or often by more grizzly public executions. To transfer to a new host especially a modern human requires preparation and the human hosts have to be carefully picked and often drugged for the Melkorne possession to succeed.

“Wow thank god for that!” replied Stuart who looked at Stephen who was also obviously relieved by this news.

“ I was worried about that too,” agreed Stephen.

“ The longer the Melkorne has been in the Hosts body, the more vulnerable they are if anything unexpected happens to the host,” emphasised Sofia.” The Melkorne may seem to hold all the cards but it is still a symbiotic existence…. Harm the host you harm them.”

“So what is left of the hosts Karma or spirit?” asked Toreq thoughtfully.

“ Sadly usually within 72 hours of the possession only the hosts memories will remain and the Melkorne despise these memories as a sign of our weakness and their own superiority ,” said Sofia.” The hosts spirit or Karma will have been consumed by the Melkorne totally.”

“ So in effect we will be freeing them,” mused Stephen.

Sofia slowly nodded…

By now evening was upon them and Toreq gently suggested they call it a day and get food and relax at the galley which they all agreed to.

When they had all eaten and chatted in the galley Toreq and Branion and then Stuart left to return to their quarters leaving Stephen and Sofia alone. Sofia then suggested they get themselves a drink and go to the Deflector control room to enjoy their favourite view again. They were both on a high and laughing after their time on the firing range and giggled like teenagers as they made their way along the corridor. Once inside Sofia operated the control to uncover the viewing windows whilst Stephen used various seat cushions to make a comfy nest on the floor for them to sit on. Stephen had brought the glasses and a jug of Sangria for them to enjoy and they sat beside each other, sipped their drink and chatted.

“Every day it just gets better and better Stephen,” said Sofia happily. ”That was one of my my dreams as a young girl to actually be a federation crew member . To fly on a star ship and perhaps fire a Phasor.”

“ I promised you a an adventure when I told you to come on this trip,” chuckled Stephen.

“Yeah like you planned all this,” she chuckled playfully slapping him on the arm.

“Remember how long it took me to convince you to come to England?” he teased her.

Stephen then noticed a tear running down Sofias face and smiling she wiped it away and as he turned towards her she put her arms around him and hugged him.

“ I can’t help it I am crying …but its’s with happiness and joy Stephen..” she sobbed and then she gently kissed him on his cheek. “I never thought I could feel such happiness again…In fact I have never felt such happiness before Stephen and its….all because of you.”

As she hugged him tightly her face against his he could feel her tears on his cheek and he was at a loss for words.. Instead he put his glass down and then slowly pulled her around to face him and he kissed her once gently on each eye softly kissing her tears away.

“You know how I feel Sofia,” he said gently.

She nodded and then they kissed very gently and slowly..

“ I couldn’t have done this without you,” she said as she broke away.” You helped me in every way Stephen …I mean you helped me with everything help advice support. When I felt alone you were there at two in the morning to talk to me and money yes, but you gave me confidence and more than anything Stephen you gave me hope..”

She then kissed him again their lips and tongues met and gently explored each other and when she broke off this time she smiled.

“ I think I am feeling the same way now Stephen,” she whispered.

Stephen smiled and reaching down he picked up his glass and sipped some of his Sangria, Sofia picked hers up and they playfully chinked their glasses together.

“Here is to our future,” quipped Stephen.

“Together in the heavens, ”suggested Sofia who waved her hand with her glass in it to the windows and the majestic views of the Earth below.

Stephen sipped his drink and sighed as he took in the wondrous sight of their ship orbiting the beautiful Planet and above the west coast of America. Then Stephen thought about the full scope of what they were involved in and also the seriousness of their mission.

“ How do you feel about operating the Portal now?” he asked gently.

Sofia sighed as she also thought about the seriousness of their mission,

“ I think I have got it,” she replied calmly.” Stuart and Toreq will test me in the morning but I do feel more confident now. In the beginning I was terrified and scared I could fail but Stuart and Toreq are really very good.”

“ Well it probably helps that you’re a genius too Sofia,” teased Stephen which gained him another playful slap on his arm from her.

“Well I will make our travel arrangements, Flights hotels etc and contact Unity and tell them of our plans, and they will probably want to ring you.”

“and what will I say?” asked Sofia.

“I will give you a paper with our flight details and points for you to say we will rehearse it..don’t worry,” assured Stephen.” Then tomorrow afternoon we can select and pack our clothes and bags ready for our trip.”

“So when might we go?” asked Sofia snuggling closer to Stephen.

“ The day after tomorrow I think,” mused Stephen.” We can practise using our weapons on the range again tomorrow as well.”

The two of them then sat together Stephen put his arm gently around Sofia’s waist and pulled her closer as they gazed at the magnificent sight below. They happily sat in silence together Sofia resting her head on Stephens shoulder only occasionally commenting or pointing out something to Stephen. Stephen was happy to sit in silence, though if he turned his head slightly he could savour the fragrance of Sofia’s hair and he occasionally leaned down and kissed her gently on the forehead. After nearly an hour they finished their Sangria and Sofia was yawning so they decided to call it a day and after tidying up they headed back to their cabin.

Chapter 8

For once Stephen woke before Sofia had left for breakfast and she smiled warmly at him as he surfaced and quietly swung out of his bed and stood up.

She was just straightening out the shiny blue loose fitting top she was wearing and then she walked over to Stephen and hugged him.

“You looked so cute when your asleep ,” she whispered and then kissed him on the cheek.

Stephen hugged her back and then gently stroked her back.” Ok sadly you have to let me go Sofia I have to get ready honey.”

She hugged him again and quickly kissed him twice,” Go then my Prince.”

Stephen chuckled as he walked to the bathroom, ”A Prince now am I ?”

Sofia sat down and started to apply some mascara.

“I always imagined the hero in the Crimson Sails who took Soll away to her new life was a Prince and I always dreamt and hoped some day a Prince would come with a ship with crimson sails and carry me off,” she said softly.” Well here we are Stephen so you must be my Prince.”

Stephen who was running some hot water in the sink so he could have a shave chuckled at this. ”Why thank you …my Princess then,”

Sofia then sprayed some of her perfume on herself and stood up and looking at Stephen she pointed at the door and made the walking sign with her fingers and then blew him a kiss.

“See you in the Galley ,” whispered Stephen to her as she left.

Stephen quickly shaved and then showered then quietly went back to his locker and dressed in grey jeans and a black top and his beloved desert boots. He then walked across the room and gently shook Stuarts shoulder.

“Wakey wakey sleepy head,” he teased.

Stuart quickly rolled over and sat up stretching his arms and yawned then he looked quizzically at Stephen.

“ Yeah cheers Uncle Stephen,” he said with an air of sarcasm.” Or should I call you Prince Stephen from now on.%

“You wee sneaky shit,” chided Stephen jokingly.

Stuart laughed as he swung out of the bed, stood up and slowly stretched again, ….”you two should really get another Cabin Stephen..”

Stephen shrugged his shoulders,” It’s not up to me Stuart… I will see you in the galley.”

With that Stephen left the cabin and made his way to the galley where sure enough Sofia was sitting opposite Toreq at the large oval table where they usually sat and they were eating their breakfast. Stephen asked if he could get them anything and then he went to the replicator and ordered some Andorran pastries and some Tea then sat back down besides Sofia.

“ I thought you were off Tea and coffee these days?” she queried gently.

Stephen sipped the tea and sighed,” Well Sofia I still enjoy a cuppa on special occasions and I think we are about to do something special so I thought what the hell I am having Tea and tonight I will have a slap up meal and even ice cream afterwards.” He then smiled at Sofia and added,” You can have ice cream too Sofia remember everything is vegan on this ship.”

“I will happily join you on that then,” responded Sofia warmly.

“Something else for us to look forward too then Sofia,” said Stephen.

“Commander Walker introduced me to your Ice cream,” added Toreq.” I found it most agreeable to my taste buds.”

Stephen smiled at them both and cheerfully concluded, ”Well you cannot argue with Vulcan Logic Folks, I think that’s decided.”

At that Stephen tucked into his Andorian pastry which was again delicious and then Branion arrived and they discussed booking the flights and where they could teleport down in LAX unnoticed. Also Stephen suggested they try a dry run so he could test the credit cards etc and their comms devices before they actually went into a live mission. Brannion agreed they could do that after lunch and after their next weapons practice. After that Stephen went to the lab and with Branion organised the flights and booked their rooms in the Hotel he picked.

At the same time Toreq and Stuart were testing Sofia on operating the Portal running constant simulations and throwing problems at her all the time and both seemed to be impressed with her skill and growing confidence. After a break for lunch they all went back to the armoury and tested their comms and other devices were functioning and Stephen told Sofia they were going to transport down into LAX and then Pasadena and test their comms and back up devices as well as to make sure their credit cards were working. So they both went back to their cabin and got changed into their new attire..

Stephen Wore his black leather motorcycle jacket black jeans and desert boots and a plain purple T shirt and he picked up his plain black baseball cap. Sofiai wore some slim fitting blue jeans a cream loose fitting top and a comfy Blue short jacket she had picked from current magazines and she had had replicated She carried a matching blueover the shoulder bag she had again replicated from a current 2051 magazine design. Stephen loved his leather jacket as it had numerous zip up pockets so he could carry everything he needed and they both checked their wallets money new passports and airline tickets and customs forms. They both giggled nervously as they then made their way to the transporter room.

“Just relax we are going to transport into Terminal six arrivals at LAX and just do a quick recce,” advised Stephen.” Check our Comms and back ups work then transport into Pasadena again have a look about then check our credit cards work .”

“We are going shopping …” chuckled Sofia.

“ Well sort off,” reasoned Stephen as they arrived at the transporter room. Inside was Toreq and Stuart by the controls.

“I will be your Transporter Pilot for the Day,” quipped Stuart Proudly.

“Transporter Operator,” corrected Toreq.”I am training him up for this Task.”

“So you can relax,” chuckled Stuart.” It’s a doddle..”

Toreq sighed …” well apart from those few mistakes…You seem to have grasped it.”

“Few mistakes .??” queried Sofia.

Stuart Waved his hand dismissively, “ It’s fine…Just Toreq and his Vulcan Humour.”

“I didn’t think Vulcans told Jokes??” mused Stephen.

“ They are just have a very dry sense of humour,” reasoned Stuart. ”Some people don’t always get it…but I do.”

Toreq looked visibly puzzled now,” really…. I wasn’t joking.”

“ ok enough…” Said Stephen. “ Are we ready?”

Toreq nodded almost formally, “ Commander Brannion is on the bridge and we have time slipped to the day before your planned arrival.. The Thursday and we are directly above LAX. We have entered the co ordinates you picked yourself . One of the infant nursing rooms in the arrivals lounge for your Terminal.. we can pick an empty one but our scanners show they are all empty so that is academic.”

Toreq then looked to Stuart who enthusiastically picked up, “ So folks stand on the Transporter platform and pick a spot.. and we can get going..”

Sofia reached out and squezzed Stephen s hand and he smiled back and winked at her..

“ Shall we then Stephen?” she asked.

Stephen nodded and they both walked over and stood on one of the circles on the transporter platform beside each other

“ It is a warm day sunny and dry 27c,” added Stuart. ”So just ……relax…and…..Energise.”

“ You don’t have to say that,” observed Toreq.

“Yes but Scotty said it…” countered Stuart.” So energise folks…”

Stephen Glanced at Sofia and smiled as Stuart under Toreqs guidance operated the Transporter and then he and Sofia felt the same tingling sensation as before. They slowly heard the melodic purring noise grow and the room around them went opaque and blurred into a white light. In what seemed ages but was probably just a second or two the white light changed back into a blurry picture and they found themselves in a pleasantly Blue room.

Sofia chuckled and Stephen joined in and they looked about the room that was set aside as a infants changing room and they were happy to see it was empty. Stephen then reached into his pocket and lifted out his mobile phone and dialled the Ship.

“ Pashtan This Stephen,” he announced. “ Can you hear me?”

“ I can hear you loud and clear,” replied Toreq from onborad the ship.

“ And I can hear and monitor you from the Bridge,” added Branion.

“ Excellent, “ said Stephen .” I will ring of now and let Sofia check her phone.”

Stephen then ended the call and nodded to Sofia who had her phone at the ready and she quickly dialled in and rang the ship. In a short time she confirmed her phone was working correctly and Branion urged them to activate their comms rings and leave them on.

“ That way we can check and monitor your positions accurately and communicate discreetly only u will hear our signal to you yet we can discreetly listen in to your conversations with others and even monitor your vital life signs.”

“Ok I will ring off and we will activate the comms rings,” agreed Sofia who promptly ended the call and put her phone back in her jackets inside pocket. She nodded to Stephen and they both pressed the comms rings activation button.

“ Can you Hear me?” she asked.

“ Yes,” replied Branion.”I can read your life signs too.”

“And Mine?” queried Stephen.

Both Toreq and Branion quickly confirmed all was well an Stephen and Sofia left their comms rings activated and they left the Infants changing room.

“Act Casual,” cautioned Branion.

Sofia glanced at Stephen and they both tried not to laugh at this obvious advice and went out into the large Terminal 6 area of LAX which was busy but happily not too busy. Stephen stood still and took it all in he had been to LAX over twenty times over the years and although it had been modernised he still recognised it. Sofia pointed to the signs.

“ That way to Customs Baggage reclaim and homeland security,” she observed.

Stephen nodded ,” We will just have our Cabin luggage so straight through to Customs and then homeland security…”

“Your tickets will be genuine and the airline and homeland security computers will show your genuine passengers straight of the flights..even down to your seat numbers ,” They heard Branion assure them.

Just then Stephen felt Sofia tug at his arm and turning she pointed him to a large window overlooking the aircraft outside. He looked at the large parked airplane and could not help but wander closer to window to admire it as it was truly amazing looking.

“Plane Porn,” chuckled Sofia as she knew Stephen was a aeronautical engineer by occupation and he would love it. Stephen just nodded as he looked at the design , it about the same size as the old jumbo jet but its fuselage was wider than the old 747 or 380 and merged directly into the wings. So instead of being 10 seats across this was probably 20 seats across and the passengers were now actually sitting in the wings. Yet the swept slender wings appeared more graceful than the older aircraft and the other big difference was the engines had been moved from under the wings to the rear tail plane. On the front of the fuselage forward of the wings it bore the legend Boeing Douglas Model Airliner BDMA 847.

“I could take a few pictures of this with my phone and make a fortune,” chuckled Stephen.

“Branion would have a fit,” mused Sofia.

“ I would not allow that at all..” corrected Branion who could hear their conversation.

“ Remind me to turn this of if I have to use the Bathroom,” observed Sofia.

“ It is weird no one else can hear them,”chuckled Stephen.

“ Your skin receives our signal through the ring and transmits via its nerves to your Brian so only you can hear us,” explained Toreq.

“ And that’s’s not weird at all,” joked Sofia.

“Kinda Cute and cool though ,” they both heard Stuart Chime in.

Stephen smiled then looked around at the crowds of people milling though the terminal and he could see the clothes hadn’t really changed that much and they didn’t look out of place. They then gently walked down the terminal trying not to look surprised at everything they saw They both observed pairs of the now familiar red brown leather clad uniforms of the Unity Corporations security arm. Sure on their chest they wore the old LAPD badge from years back but on their shoulders above there rank insignia was the UNITY Corps Logo and Emblem. They all seemed to have truncheons handcuffs and pistols hanging from their belts but also they each carried a futuristic short barrelled carbine and each and wore black full faced helmets again sporting the LAPD insignia.

Sofia deliberately made mental notes of their surroundings where the toilets were, the various shops and where they should go tomorrow and how everyone else was reacting. Then she compared it too London Gatwick she had been to only a week ago and smiled when she realised that had been 30 years in the past and suppressed a smile.

After a while Stephen touched her arm and gestured with his head back the way they had come from and Sofia understood what he meant and nodded in agreement. They both gently made their way back into the terminal and found the infant changing rooms and finding them entered one of the empty ones. They both closed the door behind them and stood in the empty room.

“ Pick a quiet spot in the Pasadena Memorial Park guys and we are ready for transport,” announced Stephen to his crewmates up above.

“ I have picked a place you would be unobserved from and gave Toreq and his trainee the co-ordinates,” announced Branion.

“Trainee!” complained Stuart loudly..” … And they said the Vulcans had a bad sense of humour… seems the Betazoids are just as…”

“When you are ready gentlemen,” cut in Sofia firmly.” You may be on a Time ship but you are wasting that precious commodity.. as we are ready.”

“ Ok sorry,” agreed Stuart. “ coordinates entered and accepted in 3..2…1…energise..”

In a few seconds they both found themselves in the warm sunny Pasadena Memorial Park in between a number of trees that allowed them to appear unseen from any eyes. Stephen looked around and smiled as he could see beyond the trees was a skateboard park and lots of teenagers were there. Other couples were walking around a few enjoying picnics or sitting in a bandstand to avoid the hot midday sun. Stephen looked around again and remembered his bearings and where he had been before.

“ Have you been here many times ?” asked Sofia.

“This is number seven,” reasoned Stephen.

“Has it changed much?”

Stephen then held out his hand and Sofia accepted it and Stephen led her southwards through the park past the skate rink and the tennis courts.  
 “ Let’s find out ,” he said. “ We wll head into town but back up there was Marstons Diner and they did great breakfasts…one of those breakfasts would set you up all day. They soon noticed the cars that were on the roads although very modern and all electric they still mostly rode on wheels but there was a number of hover cars, but they only hovered the same height as a normal wheeled car. When they reached East Colorado Boulevard they turned west and crossed the road then Stephen pointed out a large restaurant on the corner to Sofia.

“ The Cheesecake Factory where Penny worked,” he announced. “ Penny used to work there and they do great Mojitos… We shall eat there tomorrow night, I booked us a table.”

Sofia looked Puzzled,” Stephen who is Penny?”

“From the TV show the Big Bang Theory,” he replied chuckling.

“So before she got the Role in the show she worked here?” queried Sofia.

“ Well no, she worked here in the show,” explained Stephen.” Spock Kirk Data Geordie la Forge and Will Wheaton all were in the show…every Trekker knows that.”

He sighed then stopped and pointed to a Sandwich shop, “Sofia lets check our cards work and grab some real food eh?”

They both went in and Stephen bought a spicey meat roll and coke and was glad to see his card worked fine …Sofia had a a mixed Veggie Role and a fruit juice and used hers then they headed back out.Stephen then led them south the through some smaller streets and alleyways until they emerged on Green street and headed eastwards again. They chatted as they walked past the very large Pasadena Convention Center then Stephen headed back north past the still attractive and impressive Pasadena Town Hall. Built in 1927 in a Spanish colonial style with its distinctive central tower and dome it was often described as the crown jewels of Pasadena and was still in 2051 a great looking building.

“ I like Pasadena,” observed Sofia.” The streets are clean, the buildings are nice and the people smile and these buildings are very attractive.”

Stephen smiled and nodded enthusiastically..” I love it here in our time or in this one.”

He gestured at the wonderful looking Town Hall

“ This also doubled as Pawnee City Hall in the hilarious tv show Parks and Recreation,” Stephen pointed out to Sofia.” We will see if you can find it on the Ships computer.”

“ You boys and your tv shows,” mused Sofia.” Big Bang Theory Doctor Who and now…”

“ Says the Queen of Star Trek herself….” Teased Stephen laughing.

Sofia jokingly punched him in the arm and they both laughed as they walked past the City hall along the bright and clean streets of Pasadena. In a few hundred yards they turned the corner and there was the Westin Pasadena hotel.

“Is this where we are staying?” asked Sofia.

“Well you booked two adjacent rooms for us for three nights,” replied Stephen.

“Do you know it ?” aske Sofia.

“ Stayed a few times,” chuckled Stephen.” Got drunk her a few times after the Convention at the Conference Centre we just passed.”

“Three nights?” queried Sofia.

“ Had to make them think we are coming over as a serious partners,” reasoned Stephen.” I booked the separate rooms is for appearances sake. Once they paid the money into your account and then you transferred my portion of it into my account.”

“ They paid It?” queried Sofia.

Stephen nodded,” Four days ago you got Four hundred thousand dollars and you transferred nearly half of that into my account then booked the flight tickets hotel tickets and the airport to hotel transfer etc. Doctor Kamen has been sending you emails and leaving messages on your Queens university answer phone we set up for you. We are deliberately coming in on the Friday and going to meet them on the Saturday as the only people who will be at the facility will be the absolute minimum. When we go back you can ring Kamen yourself…”

“What do I say and when did all this happen?” asked Sofia in a slightly worried tone.

“ Don’t fret me and Branion set it all up whilst you were learning how to work the CTP.. You had enough to worry about.. I have a script prepared and we can rehearse it before you do it.”

“Really Stephen ?” queried Sofia. ”It could take time…”

“Don’t forget all that wibbly wobbly timey wimey stuff Sofia,” assured Stephen..” After all we are on a Federation Time ship.”

Sofia smiled and again punched him on the arm playfully.” Don’t quote Doctor Who at me..”

Stephen smiled at her,” Well I think we can head back to the park I am confident we can find our way about and nothing has changed that much…”

“ Oh really?” queried Sofia pointing up in the sky. Stephen looked up to see a line of Unity Corporation security vehicle hover cars and other escorted vehicles flying overhead in a convoy perhaps two hundred or so feet above the East Colorado Boulevard.

“Wow ,” sighed Stephen.” I read only they and other emergency vehicles and a few other select vehicles are allowed to fly in the regulated Zones even the other hover cars have to use street level like the rest of the peasants….So I guess a few things have changed around here.”

With that Stephen turned and taking Sofia’s hand they walked back a more direct way that he remembered to the Park. When he got back he smiled at Sofia.

“ Did you enjoy our little break in Pasadena?”

She nodded the leaning forward she reached up and kissed Stephen gently on the lips.

“ You impressed me today Stephen, you are always joking about but you do know your way around this Pasadena and you always seem to surprise me.”

“In a good way I hope?” asked Stephen who then kissed Sofia back.

Just then a voice interrupted them again…

“Ok you lovebirds is it time to come home?” joked Stuart who fully realised he was breaking a romantic moment.

“ Ok ,” sighed Sofia.” Two to beam up..”

“ I have been told it is wrong to say that,” Stuart responded.

Sofia chuckled,” Transport us then… and Stephen we must remember to turn these comms rings off whenever we are………..”

Before Sofia could finish they were transported back to the ship and found themselves confronted with Stuart and Toreq who looking very pleased with themselves.

“ so what have we missed?” asked Stephen.

“ We have been busy I have been practising transporting various articles around the ship and LA under Toreqs guidance of course,” replied Stuart.

Toreq nodded in agreement ,” Yes Stuart is fairly proficient now with the transporter.”

“ We still kept an eye out for you and monitored everything you did …”

“and said too..” added Sofia.

“Safety ,” replied Stuart defensively .” We gotta do that.”

“ Commander Branion has also made a useful discovery,” said Toreq.” Thanks to the section 31 stealth monitors we planted at their research facility and it all came from your idea Stephen.”

With that the four of them headed up to the bridge where they found the Portly Betazoid commander also looking pleased with himself sitting in the Captains chair.

“What did you find?” asked Stephen.

Branion flicked a switch and on the main viewing screen came the camera pictures from their three stealth cameras they had mounted on the entrances to the Research facility. The pictures showed a steady procession of people entering and leaving the building at various times of the night and day over the course of the last three months.

“ I was reading the Section 31 specifications for the devices and found they can not only record sounds and pictures but by switching to infra red we can scan their inner body temperatures and by adjusting the sound we can even zero in on their heartbeats per minute..” announced Branion proudly.

“How does this help us?” asked Stuart with an air of doubt in his voice.

“ The humans body temperature is is between 36c and 37c at 38 Cecius you are running a fever at the same time Vulcans average between 35c to 37c whilst we Betazoids are between 36 to 38c a touch warmer. At the same time the human heartrate is between 60 – 90 beats per minute a top athlete it can drop to 42 but only a top athlete. A Vulcan is 60 to 80 bpm whist we Betazoids are a steady 70 to 90 bpm.”

“And this helps because?” queried Stuart.

“ I zeroed in on Malachi Uttick when he entered the building and when I switched to the infra red mode and look what I found…”

They looked at a picture of the front entrance and there was the man himself immaculate in his suit approaching the door entrance that was flanked by two armed Unity Corporation guards. Then Branion pressed a control and the two guards appeared blueis and Uttick figure was now tinted red in colour and each figure contained the temp indicated for one guard it was 36’5 c and the other 37c whilst Uttick core temperature was 39c.

Branion hit another switch and another figure came up showing the heart rates..” The gaurds are running at 70 and 75 beats per minute normal for two healthy males at rest but Uttick is running a high temperature yet a heartrate of only 50 beats per minute…I checked this again and again whenever he visited or left the building and these are constant.”

“This is how we can detect a Melkorne in Possession of a human body,” reasoned Sofia.

“ Another reason why I liked you from the start,” declared Branion smiling at a slightly embarrassed Sofia.” So I checked everyone else entering the facility in our three month window and came up with three more who match him exactly and consistently are Doctor Kamen , Doctor Bryce and his large bodyguard who he calls Taurus.”

“ it would make sense his most trusted men and who would know all about the operation of the CTP Cosmic Time Portal are of course fellow Melkornes,” surmised Toreq.

With a flick of the switch The faces of the four men appeared on the screen in normal view then Branion looked at Stephen and Sofia in turn.” I will transfer their images to your phones you must recognise them immediately and beware. They may look human and once were but they are no longer ,they are all willing accomplices in mass murder and are planning to be so again.”

“Don’t fuck around Uncle Stephen don’t stun them ,” urged Stuart.” like the SAS Double tap to the head if they are dead they can’t be a threat.”

Stephen nodded grimly recalling the well known British SAS Special Forces method for taking care of any threat,” Don’t worry Stuart I had already decided that.”

“To capture Uttick could yield the Fedration much vital intelligence,” said Toreq first to Stephen and then to Sofia.” The stun setting will incapacitate them for perhaps a day.. enough time for us to accomplish our mission and still take them as captives.”

Branion held up a hand,” Enough Toreq whilst I admire Suraks writings on mercy and preserving the lives of other species these creatures are are too dangerous and devious to try and bring back to the ship. You ca not be sure the Stun setting will work for that length of time on these Aliens that are controlling the human bodies.”

“But Sofia please….you told me you admire our ways… Their human bodies will be incapacitated,” implored Toreq.

“ Button it and be quiet Toreq they have changed those bodies we can see that ,” said Stuart almost angrily at the Vulcan.

“Yes that is it Toreq Stop It, sometimes your Vulcan sensablities must be over ridden! “ announced Branion dismissively who then turned to the others. ”I have transferred the pictures to your mobile phone devices Stephen and Sofia.”

Stephen nodded then turned to Sofia,” We will go back to our room and I can run through and we can practise for your phone call with Doctor Kamen. Then when we are ready we can timeslip back to the Wednesday…”

They went back to the quarters and Stephen gave Sofia the Notes he had prepared for her which Sofia read and reread then queried them extensively. Finally she rewrote her own version and went through these with Stephen and together they altered these until they agreed upon a final version for her to use.

“Stephen I love your writing your articles and your stories but…” she said softly

“But?” queried Stephen.

She leaned forward and gently squeezed his hand,” But ..your a man and you should run it past me before you imagine what a woman might say..ok”

Stephen smiled and nodded.” You can edit all my stuff from now on,,,ok?”

“Agreed,” replied Sofia and they then proceeded to practise the phone conversation several times until Sofia was confident and happy with it.

“ OK,” said Stephen.” I will get Brannion to timeslip us to the Wednesday morning ….9am when you said you would ring him and he said he will be in his office. Remember your in Belfast and its 5pm and you have all the flight details etc.. here… and his number etc.. is on your phone.”

Sofia nodded and Stephen went over to the wall intercom and told Branion they were ready and within 30 seconds Branion informed him it was done and Stephen nodded to Sofia.

“I never felt a thing,” she sighed..” It is amazing..”

Stephen walked back over and sat down at the table opposite Sofia and gave her a smile and a thumbs up and she nodded and picking up her phone rang the Doctors number whilst putting it on speaker mode.

“ Hello is that Doctor Sofia Ivanov?” came the reply.

Stephen gave Sofia a triumphant thumbs up.

“ Yes and is this Doctor Kamen?”

“ Yes but you can call me Alexander,” came his reply.” I have been trying to get in touch with you for over a week now I am so glad your finally coming over.”

“ Yes the time difference with LA and here in Ireland doesn’t help and I have been so busy but we had our emails and I am happy to say we will be in LA on Friday ..”

“ You didn’t have to arrange your own flights, we would have been happy to do that all for you and MR Mcloughlin. Mister Uttick himself told me you are to be like his personal guests …”

“ Well that sounds wonderful however Mister Mccloughlin was adamant we made our own arrangements… he can be quite stubborn at times and a bit suspicious,” Said Sofia.” He only just about trusts me and was reluctant at first to talk.. He never even told his Cousin Doctor Stuart Mccloughlin the head of this department the full story of his finds.”

“ I spoke to Doctor Mccloughlin yesterday and he vouched for you in glowing terms and said Stephen has made an interesting find but didn’t want to share it with the university and that’s why we are here.. So can you give me your flight and hotel details?”

Sofia read them out and gently rebuffed Doctor Kamen who offered to pick them up from LAX personally and to meet up with them on the Friday night.

“ That is most kind but after a transatlantic flight we will want to recoup on the Friday night and meet up with you on the Saturaday and you then you can examine the crystals yourselves..”

“That is great on Saturday there will only be myself Mister Uttick himself and a few key members of Staff in the facility so I am sure that would be better and I hope once we are sure the obsidian crystals are as pure as you say. Then after we can treat you both to a night out courtesy of Mister Uttick with you both as his honoured guests and on the Sunday meet and discuss our plans and proposals.”

“ That sounds fantastic ,” cooed Sofia.” You will be very impressed by the quality of these crystals I can assure you.”

“ Good and let me say mister Uttick has already told me we can offer both you and Mr Mccloughlin not only guaranteed money for this discovery but positions within the corporation to oversee the extraction of it. Such a deal with us would set you both up for life and we could use a person with your drive in our organisation also we like and admire Mister Mcloughlin’s careful discreet way of carrying out his business. .”

“Well you can tell him yourself on Saturday,” replied Sofia.” However I think he will be pleased to hear that.”

“ Absolutely however I insist you let us pick you up from the Westin Hotel and we can send a car to pick you up at 11am..Mister Uttick would not be happy if you just came in a common taxi for such a historic meeting..he would never forgive me.”

Sofia laughed gently ,” No Doctor Kamen that would be fine..”   
 “ Please you must called me Alexander when we are speaking personally in front of the other staff we are both Doctors but not like this..”

”Why thank you Alexander and like this I am Sofia…”

“ It is such a shame we couldn’t catch up sooner but if there are any hiccups at the airport with customs the hotel your pick up or anything call me at anytime ok Sofia???”

“ That is too kind Alexander I will bear that in mind..”

“ Thank you Sofia I look forward to meeting you on Saturday morning… message me on the Friday that you have arrived ok or I will worry”

Sofia looked triumphant as she replied ,” Okay Alexander I will message you as soon as we arrive… thank you very much…….goodbye.”

With a click she put the phone down and looked to Stephen..

“ How did I do??”

Stephen stood up laughing he picked Sofia up and hugged her.Then lifting her off the ground he laughed and spun them both around..

“ You were fucking ace.. you could have been a real spy..”

He kissed her…” You had him eating out of your hand.”

“ You think so???” she asked shocked that she had done so well..

“Damn right, god I am so proud of you honey…”

They then embraced and kissed properly and with some passion finally when they broke off Stephen sighed…

“This is our last night babe… tomorrow it happens”

Sofia looked at him in the eye and smiled then kissed him again ,”I know Stephen..”

Stephen kissed her again gently..

“We should pack.. “ she said.

An hour later Stuart arrived and said it was time to eat and everyone would be in the Galley shortly…Stephen and Sofia both agreed to go with him. When they got there both Toreq and Bannion were there and both looked happy and both came over to congratulate Sofia on her performance with Doctor Kamen.

“ oh my god,” she exclaimed.” I didn’t know you were all listening in… I am so shocked.”

“I thought we wouldn’t mention that,” explained Stephen…” Too much Pressure.”

Sofia nodded …” Oh yes I would have froze…”

“ Well it worked as we also monitored Doctor Kamen afterwords speaking to his boss Malachi Uttick and they fell for it totally.. They think you are the answer to all their plans and will offer you both anything to get the obsidian they need. However I must caution you UttIck says he will have you under surveillance from as soon as you clear customs in LAX and he says he will have your rooms nailed down that was his comment…”

Sofia looked at Stephen with a concerned expression,” What do we do?”

Stephen smiled happily though,” No worries honey I expected this 100 % and we have planned for it..I will run through it in the morning Sofia..relax”

Branion nodded enthusiastically, “ Yes Sofia I must say Stephen has shown me ways of deviousness I never knew existed before… we used to say the Ferengi or Romulans were the masters of subterfuge but he has taught me so much. We have learned how to monitor their comms systems and can keep you subtly informed using the Comms rings updating you all the time without anyone else hearing.. of their positions plans etc..”

Stuart stepped forward ,” enough…that’s it…till the morning…Everyone has been ace Especially Sofia and our Stephen… now a good meal and drinks…Tonight we celebrate…”

Sofia wasn’t sure..” We have a lot to do in the morning though we can’t go too mad.”

Stuart laughed..” Sofia they are hooked and it’s a time ship so tonight we can celebrate ok! You can have a lie in what ever time you get up we can make it any frigging time.. ”

Sofia looked at each of them in turn and they all nodded even Toreq chuckled ..” you both deserve it…… I will monitor things later on.”

Stuart stepped forward and hugged Toreq,” we have had our differences me and Toreq Sofia but I love this Vulcan guy….and his lovely people.”

Toreq looked embarrassed and they all laughed when Stuart kissed his cheek.

“ You’re the best Mate..”

Stuart then bade them all sit down and told them he had experimented with the food replicators and got the perfect going away meal.

“ Sofia ,Stephen tells me your found of Celtic things… so I had the replicator make us Irish stew just like my Nanny Renee made us…Stephens mum… Now its Lamb flavoured but fully vegan. It took four goes but its perfect now…would you like that?”

Sofia wiped away a tear and smiled…” Yes please.. I would love to try your mums Stew..”

Stuart looked around and everyone else nodded so he went off to fetch it for everyone and it went down a treat and they followed that up with vanilla cheesecake and ice cream which Branion and Toreq both love and they had two helpings each. Afterwards Stuart insisted on being barman as well and asked Sofia what she would have..

“ I don’t normally drink at all Stuart,” she sighed.

“Well your celebrating with not one but two McCloughlins so we will have none of that Sofia, you have tooo choose..”

“ We will both have Mojitos ,” suggested Stephen and Sofia nodded agreement.” I might as well try them since you have raved about them…”

“ I had the replicator add more sugar syrup to them,” added Stuart.” So they are just about perfect now.”

When the drinks arrived Sofia had a sip and smiled enthusiastically,” Oh wow Stephen and Stuart these a re lovely.”

Stephen patted Stuart on his back in thanks and they both laughed Branion was also impressed by Stuarts adjustments.

“ I must say I find this a most invigorating Drink ..very refreshing..”

“ The first few are,” joked Stuart.” Then you won’t remember the rest.”

After that Stuart announced he was going to get two jugs of it and they could all go to the Deflector control room and enjoy the drinks and the view from there.

“It’s not just you two love birds who like it,” he remarked when they arrived and they opened the viewing panels.” I have been coming down after breakfast most mornings…”

Sofia blushed but Stephen chuckled,” You were always a cheeky we bugger Stuart.”

“ I take after my dad,” he said proudly

“and your not so wee anymore,” added Stephen.

Branion was staring out at the magnificent view of the earth slowly orbiting below.

“ I forget sometimes of the beauty we can see from here,” he mused gently. Then he paused wiped something from his eye he sipped his drink and then he looked gently at Sofia and Stephen in turn. “ I often scoffed at early mankind’s capabilities dismissing them as primitive but you three and you two Sofia and Stephen particularly have totally changed my opinion. Your skills and willingness too risk all too help us is astounding and when we return I shall inform the Agency they should be prepared to accept the use of human agents from your 21st century.”

“ Thank you,” replied Sofia.” but the Melkorne threaten my children’s future Branion so of course we had too help.”

“ She is like a she wolf defending her cubs,” reasoned Stephen.” Don’t try and stop her.”

Without thinking Sofia reached over and gently squeezed Stephens hand and he gently raised it up and kissed it.

“ It has been fascinating for me as a Vulcan who has always been keen on early human and Federation Pre history to meet you all,” added Toreq who stood next to Stuart.” It has been a experience.”

Stuart playfully elbowed his friend in the side of his arm,” Admit it when this is done you will miss us my Vulcan buddy.”

To both Sofia’s And Stephens surprise they watched Toreq smile and chuckle gently.

“It is true I will miss you…we are friends now..”said Toreq quietly

At that everyone laughed as Stuart put his arm around the Vulcan and hugged him affectionately.

“ We have too complete the mission first,” mused Branion before sipping from his glass of mojitos again almost absentmindedly.

“ We discussed what we can do given various possible outcomes its not just Plan A or B and you can monitor their radio chatter, visually watch them then tell us what they are up to discreetly through our comms rings,” reasoned Stephen.

Brannion nodded ,” I will monitor them totally don’t worry…”

They all chatted and made light of what tomorrow might bring and joked about their adventures so far as crewmates upon a starship. At that Stuart took another swig of his drink and started to everyone’s surprise Recite The words to Danny Boy…

“ What is this?” asked Toreq.

Sofia smiled …” It is a song an Old Irish Lament..”

Stuart Winked at her ,” Sure my Uncle Stephen here can sing it all…”

Sofia look at Stephen,” Can you Stephen,,,,? ”

“Of course you can Uncle Stephen ,” cajoled Stuart.

“A human custom?......” queried Toreq.

Stephen began to gently sing…” Oh Danny Boy,the pipes ,the pipes are calling…..From glen to glen and down the mountainside…..The summers gone and all the roses falling ..“Tis you, tis you must go …and I must bide… But come ye back when summers in the meadow…. Or all the valleys are hushed and white with snow…Tis I’ll be here in sunshine or in shadow………. O Danny boy…………….. Oh Danny Boy I love you so..”

Sofia glanced to her side and she could see Stuart whisper the sad tale behind the song to his Vulcan friend who was clearly mesmerised as Stephen carried on..

“When winters come and all the flowers are dying…and I am dead as dead I well may be…… You’ll come and find the place where I am lying and kneel and and say a prayer there for me….. But I shall hear though soft you tread above me… and all my grave shall warmer sweeter be…. And you shall bend and tell me that you love me…..and I shall sleep in peace until you come to me…..”

At that Stephen stopped and Sofia could see his eyes were wet and he looked sad then she glanced over and to her surprise he could see a tear running down Toreqs cheek.

“ A very poignant song,” observed Branion softly.

“ I can never sing anymore… I just well up,” said Stephen apologetically.

“It makes you think of all those you have lost in the past,” reasoned Toreq .” I… understand”

Sofia felt a whole raft of emotions well up inside her and she instinctively threw her arms around Stephen and hugged him fiercely. She felt an instinct to cry but fought it back and it felt good when she felt Stephen put his arms around her and he gently hugged her back,

Stuart then announced , “ I think we will all head to our quarters now and leave you two alone…Sofia give me ten minutes to move out. I am sleeping in another room tonight but I am leaving you both a present in your quarters…”

When the three left the Deflector control room Sofia gently released her grip on Stephen

“ I wonder what his surprise is?” mused Sofia.

“ Knowing our Stuart it will be a pair of Manchester United football team tops and a packet of Condoms,” chuckled Stephen.

Sofia playfully punched him in the arm,” your family are all comedians..”

“ Wait till you meet my Brother Brian, Stuarts Dad,” mused Stephen chuckling at the thought.” Now he is a real comedian.”

Stephen then smiled and gently leaned down and kissed her gently on the forehead.

“ Some things I am deadly serious about,” he said then kissed her gently on the mouth. They ever so slowly kissed gently, each savouring the taste and texture of the other. Their lips, their tongues gently touching and exploring, enjoying this beautiful perfect moment. They wrapped their arms about each other and their kiss like their embrace became deeper…. After a time Sofia broke away from the embrace.

“Lets go back ….” She sighed

Stephen nodded and they picked up their glasses from a desk and they closed the viewing panels then slowly headed out of the Deflector Control Room. When they reached their quarters they could see Stuart had indeed moved all of his clothing and kit out but he had left them a surprise. To one side of the room was a small living area with a sofa and a two armchairs and a small table. On the small table was two glasses a ice bucket and in it a bottle of champagne. Stephen chuckled and walking over he picked it up and read the label out loud to Sofia.

“Dom Perignon 2050…. Nice one Stuart…And I promised you Sofia champagne when you came to London to celebrate you getting the job in the museum for fine arts as a guide…Remember?”

“ Yes you did…..I remember,” mused Sofia and she smiled as Stephen picked up the bottle and began to unwrap and uncork it.

They both laughed as with a loud pop the cork flew out and Stephen quickly poured two glasses of the champagne and offered one to Sofia.

“ If I didn’t know better I might think you were trying to get me tipsy Stephen,” teased Sofia.

“Two mojitos and one glass of champagne is hardly that,” reasoned Stephen.” And I didn’t even know Stuart had this planned.”

Sofia smiled ,” You McCloughlin Boys… Belfast Boys the pair of you….”

“ Tell me honey does this mean you won’t block me anymore on Facebook , Instagram and Vk etc…?” joked Stephen.” You blocked me so many times in the past.”

“Yet you always came back,” sighed Sofia.

“And you always let me come back,” teased Stephen.” It must be destiny..”

Sofia reached over and pinched the skin on Stephens arm causing him to wince …

“Ouch,” he yelped jokingly.

“It all depends wither you are good or not Stephen,” she warned him gently.” If you behave we will be fine…”

“Really?” asked Stephen.” Do you promise me that Sofia Nerovnaya?”

She looked at him and smiled, “ I can promise you Stephen that I think I am falling for my Boy from Belfast who lived near Carrickfergus just like that song I remembered… From long ago.”

Stephen stepped closer to Sofia and leaning in he kissed her gently on the lips and she responded back in kind. When they broke off Sofia stared deeply at Stephen…

“ No more Champagne Stephen, Time for bed I think my lovely man…..”

She then left him and went to the bathroom. He quickly drank the champagne down and put the glasses back on the table then walked over to his bed and quickly undressed down to his boxers. When he looked up he saw Sofia had returned and she was wearing a long silky bathrobe and she looked slender sexy stunning and gorgeous. She smiled at him and turned the lighting down using the wall switch. Stephen gasped as she ever so gracefully walked over to him and put her arms around his neck, once more they kissed…He closed his eyes as they kissed and then feeling Sofia warm skin against his he realised she had slipped the robe off……..

“ I love you …….” He whispered to her as they embraced once more.

“Good……” murmured Sofia…….

Chapter 9

When Stephen woke in the morning he was happy to see Sofia was still in the bed with him snuggled into his side her head resting on the side of his chest. He tried to breath quietly not to disturb her as he recalled last night’s wonderful events. He felt so happy and complete, they had made love for the first time ever and it had been totally marvellous, without even realising it he ran his hand down the beautifully smooth skin of her back. Sofia sighed and opened her eyes and smiled warmly at him when she realised he was awake and looking at her. She kissed the side of his chest that she was resting against..

“Let’s just stay here awhile Sofia,” he sighed gently.

She ran her hand over his chest and stomach then kissed him again on his chest, “ It was amazing …everything has been amazing…last night.. here..this ship..everything .. and Stephen you too are amazing.”

“You are as well my Sofia,”he replied softly.

Stephen rolled towards her, leaned down and kissed her properly on her lips lingering as he gently stroked her back her side cupping and gently teasing… Sofia sighed then broke off gently and swung around and sat up on the edge of the bed.

“ We have work to do Stephen…”

Stephen yawned and gently stretched his arms,” I know we have world if not an entire universe to save…”

He then watched as the naked Sofia walked to bathroom and he admired the way she moved and every inch of her svelt body…

“ You have to get up too…” she gently chided him.

“ That’s part of the Problem looking at you Sofia like that,” he joked.” I already am up.”

In a short time they were both dressed and ready for the day ahead and after breakfast Sofia ran through three more simulations of working the CTP and she was now doing it in under ten minutes and that included dealing with any problems that Toreq or Stuart could throw at her. Whilst Sofia was doing that Stephen was poring over scans and surveillance films of the research lab with Branion and monitoring the local news on Pasadena and LA in general. Stephen and Branion with Stuart also looked at the false geology reports Stuart helped them prepare using genuine Queens University paperwork showing upwards of 300 tons of the purest Obsidian had been found. They also had a copy of a contract guaranteeing Stephen the mineral rights to any finds on the land from the family who owned it providing they had a equal share and a say on how it was exercised.

After all this when Sofia completed he third run through she invited Stephen to use the simulation to have a look at the lab himself before they went for real. Stephen Donned the visor and the earpiece and then Sofia brought the simulation online and at first Stephen was like everyone else disoriented and not able to keep himself from physically moving when he wanted to move in the Simulation. With Sofia’s advice he soon overcame this and she guided him around the workshop and showed him how the CTP worked and how he could help her power it up. He also was able to look around the Lab and generally familiarise himself with its layout. When done with this the two of them went with Branion to the range and practiced again using their weapons and back up devices.

They then went back to their quarters and changed in to their mission outfits and checked they had packed everything they would need. Stephen wore a pair of grey jeans his Black Desert Boots and loose fitting Black top and his bright Blue leather motorcycle Jacket with its red and yellow piping and strips and his black baseball cap, He would take a pull along Flight Travel case and had a casual shoulder bag as well. Sofia wore slim fitting Blue jeans and black slip on ankle boots a loose Black top and a lightweight Blue jacket she also had a lightweight Pull along trolley case perfect for the Aircraft overhead lockers and carried a lightweight ladies shoulder bag.

They left their luggage in the transporter room and headed to the galley where they could see their crewmates had gathered.

Stephen just had a cup of tea as Branion again went through their precautions but Sofia soon waved him down.

“ I know Brannion,” she said gently but firmly. “We will activate our comms rings so you can discreetly monitor us. We cannot discuss anything of the Mission any time unless you confirm we can …we must remain in character at all times. We will on Saturday turn our comms off when they come for us and only reactivate it when we are through their scanners and inside the Research lab…we fully understand that and all the risks.”

Branion nodded, “ Good remember one of us will be in the transporter room and Bridge at all times monitoring everything at all times. We will be able to transport you out and still destroy the facility if the worst comes to the worst.”

“ ok that’s plan C… If it all goes wrong, ”said Stephen.” Let’s hope for the best.”

Sofia looked at her friends who she had come to trust and almost regarded now as family but she knew enough was enough. She looked at Stephen who as always appeared relaxed and almost unconcerned but she knew now how his mind worked.

“ Lets do it Stephen.” She said earnestly. “ We have practised enough …Lets do it.”

Stephen looked at Stuart Toreq and Branion each in turn and smiled, “ you heard the lady guys……. We are going to begin.”

They all stood up Branion came over and hugged Sofia then Stephen each in turn..

“I will be monitoring you at all times,,” he said.

“ Well perhaps not all times,” joked Stephen.

Sofia kissed Branion on the cheek,” Thank you my friend .”

With that they all left the Galley Branion headed for the Bridge whilst Stephen and Sofia along with Toreq and Stuart headed for the Transporter room. Once there Stephen shook hands with Toreq and then Hugged Stuart his nephew.

“ You have a great future ahead and I am so proud of you Stuart ,” Stephen said.” And Your dad will be too.”

Stuart grinned broadly,” Just take no chances and get your fat arse back here in one piece..I will be here and I can beam you back at a moments notice.”

Stephen nodded and Stepped back onto a Transporter Ring holding his case in one hand and with his shoulder bag in the Other. Sofia stepped forward and Hugged Stuart tightly then kissed his cheek gently.

“ Thank you ,” she said softly.

“ The same for you,” he cautioned her too.” Take no chances Sofia. You two are family now so watch out for each other and come back safe.”

Just then Branions voice anounced over the Intercom,” We have Time slipped and its now Friday 11.06am your flight has just taxied in and the passengers are disembarking. I have found a empty infant changing room by where you were yesterday. It’s all clear and I have transferred the co-ordinates to the Transporter controls…prepare to transport.”

Stuart quickly checked the controls and nodded to Sofia,” Time to go kiddies..”

Sofia then gently swung her shoulder bag over her shoulder and picked up her travel case. She then turned and offered her hand to Toreq who had remained silent up to now. The young slim Vulcan looked at Sofia and her outstanding hand and stepped forward.

“ Sofia Nerovnaya and Stephen McCloughlin stay safe, your both now and always will be… My friends..” He then raised his right hand In the classic TV Vulcan salute.

“Live long and Prosper ,” he said warmly to them both.

Sofia gasped and nearly cried and she barely noticed Stuart countdown .

“And three two one….. energising ….”

Sofia closed her eyes as she felt that now familiar tingling feeling and heard the soft almost re assuring melodic humming sound and when she opened them again they were both in a brightly lit and decorated Infant changing room. She smiled at Stephen who also looked happy and as always relaxed and confident.

“ Oh that was so wonderful,” she cooed.” He gave us the Classic Vulcan salute Stephen… I could have kissed him..it was fantastic..”

“ It was pretty amazing,” agreed Stephen.

“ We can all hear you.. do you remember,? cautioned Stuarts voice using the comms rings.

Both Stephen and Sofia couldn’t help it and they both giggled, then after a few seconds Stephen then stood up straighter and breathed deeply…” Ok totally straight now.”

Sofia nodded and then opened the door to the changing room and they made their way out into the arrivals at Terminal six at LAX Los Angeles International Airport. There was a steady stream of passengers from various flights that had just arrived making their way to the Baggage collection Area. Sofia casually pointed to the sign indicating the direction they should go and Stephen smiled and nodded and they both mixed with the other passengers and slowly headed that way. They both passed through the baggage collection area and joined the Queue for the US Customs and Homeland security. They both had their Airline Tickets Passports and their US visa waiver forms at the ready and joined a file of people facing the various Customs desks.

A waiting uniformed customs official waved them forward..

“Are you two travelling together?” he asked.

They both smiled and nodded as he looked at their passports and he pointed to a booth

“Ok folks booth Six when he is done the green light will show and you can approach…Have a nice day thank you…” said the official pointing them to a booth where a elderly couple were being checked by a Customs officer inside the Booth. Shortly the couple were gone and the green light shone and Stephen and Sofia went forward. The Customs offical took their passports and scanned them and checked their forms ,they were then both facially scanned and their finger prints too. He seemed friendly and politely disinterested which was a relief for them both.

“ So only here for 3 nights,” he observed.” I presume its business then.”

“Sadly this time it is only business,” sighed Stephen

The guy then stamped their passports and waived them through…Sofia could hardly contain her delight at the ease of it all They then walked along a corridor and joined another queue this time for homeland security, They walked through a full body scanner and again presented their documents to another uniformed official at yet another booth. This fellow was more abrupt and asked where they were staying as he again checked their documents.

“ And the nature of your business here is?” he asked.

“ We here at the invitation Of the Unity Corporarion to Meet Mister Uttick tomorrow,” said Sofia confidently to the guard.

“ Mister …Malachi… Uttick?” asked the Officer with a pronounced change in tone..

“ Yes that’s the Man,” said Stephen happily and they both looked as the officers demeanour changed and he smiled warmly back at them both.. “ Well you folks have a great trip and I hope your meeting is successful.”

“Yes we hope it is as well,” agreed Stephen.

As they went through Sofia whispered to Stephen,” They all wear US Homeland Security insignia on their chests but their shoulder badges all say Unity Corporation…”

Stephen nodded,” Yes I spotted that Sofia…Uttick has this place sewn up..” as they both emerged from the arrivals gate they could see various friends and relatives waiting to see a loved on. There was also a slew of corporate meeters and greeters holding signs up for arriving business guests. Stephen scanned the area but couldn’t see any obvious undercover Unity agents or minders waiting for them but he knew they must be here. Sofia felt the same as Stephen but was in awe of the whole experience and loving it.

She then nudged Stephen,” So we have transport booked yes?”

Stephen as always was relaxed and smiled at Sofia then pointed to a sign,” That way honey to the…Transfer and Pick up zone..”

They both heard Branion then caution them,” ok I am picking up chatter and a call to Uttick they have eyes on you… I am scanning their radio frequencies so we will soon have them, stay in character at all times.”

This prompted Sofia to pause and text message Doctor Kramen that they had arrived and everything was great…. Inside a minute as they weaved through the throng she received a beep and saw he had responded. She looked at Stephen knowing she could not say anything and showed him the text and they both smiled,

“ The games afoot,,,” he quipped echoing Sherlock Holmes as they went up a escalator to a open parking and pick up area. Stephen had done the research and they approached a lady in a booth and give her the details and she bade them both wait… After a few moments she said,” Your transport is on row D slot 24 and is a black Tesla Limousine GTS and your driver is called Mark.”

Stephen and Sofia thanked the lady and made their way past the various taxis and Limousines that were evenly made up half and half wheeled and hovercars. Row D was exclusively hover cars and Sofia spotted the impressive futuristic looking Black Tesla with its Driver standing next to it and she waved to him. The Driver a short bald headed portly African American seemed very jolly and smiled and waved happily back at the couple. He greeted them warmly and insisted on taking their bags and putting them in the boot himself and told them to get in make themselves comfortable. Both Stephen and Sofia were genuinely excited by getting in a flying car and both giggled as they got in. Mark told them they had to put their Seatbelts on or the car wouldn’t move off as this model was ultra-safety conscious.

“ Have you ever flown in a Tesla Hover car before?” he Happily asked.

Both Sofia and Stephen said no they hadn’t and the Driver warmly laughed again,” Well Mister Elon Musk might be on the Mars colony these days but he has a personal safety introduction you must view and acknowledge before we go…Just sit back and enjoy. It will only take a moment.”

Mark obviously hit a button as and a holographic screen appeared in front of them and a slightly older Elon Musk than they both knew appeared on the screen beside a example of the Tesla model they were in. Both Stephen and Sofia were fascinated as he explained the model was all Green powered by the new crystal batteries which caused Stephen and Sofia to look too each other and smile. It had two electric power trains either of which could fly the car if one failed and was all fully automatic. He quickly ran through all the safety features and back ups and told them to say they fully understood and would obey the safety instructions and the cars AI would allow the Driver to proceed.

The cars computer asked them by name in turn if they understood and agreed and they both replied …yes…. When they did the holographic screen disappeared and Mark the driver leaned back and told them,” Ok folks.. Sorry but legally we have to do that… so just relax and enjoy the ride.”

The car moved slowly forward and then turned up to a ramp and joined a queue of other vehicles in a very short time they could see the cars pull up onto a circular pad and then the cars fans moved outboard and after a green light showed the cars lifted off and flew off. All to soon it was their turn and they both forgot the dangers of the mission they were on and they were excited by this new experience.

“ From here until we arrive at the Pasadena landing Zone its all AI automatic,” said Mark in his warm manner. “ Its all AI now these days, I can initiate a emergency landing and override it at any time but otherwise we can just enjoy the ride… folks..”

In a few seconds their car reached the pad and when the green lights indicated they lifted off Sofia reached over and squeezed Stephens hand and they both had to try and be not too overtly excited as they lifted off. Sofia was amazed as she saw the car lift higher, it was all almost dreamlike and amazing and Mark pointed out various sites below as they joined a flow of other hovercars heading northwest.

“Ok we have intercepted numerous signals…” announced Branion covertly to them. “ Your Car is as you say bugged and being followed we have intercepted all their signals and teams so we can monitor them from now on. Just be careful what you say. They are all in touch with Kamen and Uttick so be warned..”

Sofia and Stephen both looked at each other and without saying anything nodded as they each knew .. this was now dangerously for real..

“ You didn’t tell me what this Doctor Kamen came across like,” said Stephen to Sofia who instantly picked up on his intent.

“He seemed genuine and very interested in your discovery and keen to work with us,” she said.” After all he had offered to make all our travel arrangements for us…Stephen.”

Stephen smiled at Sofia before saying,” Good. I trust you Sofia and if you think we should then I will happily consider Unity Corporations offers…However as you know I prefer to make my own arrangements and remain discreet. I wouldn’t like either Unity or the people back home to think I am just a patsy. They will have to realise in Northern Ireland if they want to get access to this obsidian they will have to playball with the locals. I know thanks to my cousins Stuarts work they don’t want these crystals for power capacitance and battery storage but probably its ability to use neutrinos to step up voltages. If they want me too help I want to see what they are on about and thanks to Stuarts research we know this purity of obsidian is unheard off before . Our Obsidian could be a game changer Stuart told me had he discovered this twenty years ago it could have changed his research…and direction completely.”

Sofia instantly knew Stephen was deliberately planting the seeds for their monitors to follow and winked at him.

“ I think they will realise it quickly and we will all be happy Stephen,” she added.

They both then happily enjoyed the flight over LA with the driver mark pointing out various sights like Downtown LA the Griffiths Observatory and the Hollywood sign.

“ This trip could take up two hours in rush hour in the old days now its fifteen minutes and its reduced the normal highway travel time below to around forty five minutes,” he told them happily.” So It is green and fun don’t you think.”

“ It is fantastic,” said Sofia genuinely who was really enjoying this flight.

“ What is your range?” asked Stephen ever the aircraft engineer.

“ Over two thousand miles with the crystal batteries but the game changer with this model is I can pull up to a service centre and they replace the battery pack in 30 seconds and off I can go… no charging time.. at all. In the old days you could sit there for hours to recharge..”

Sofia reached over and Squeezed Stephens hand…. “ I don’t care this has been an amazing trip no matter what happens,,, this has been ace.”

“ Ok, we are coming into Pasadena ,” said Mark happily .” Just relax…. We will join a landing circuit.. then after I land we go through the checkpoints to enter the Pasadena Zone and travel road level and drop you off at your hotel… enjoy. Have your ID ready just in case but we file our passengers IDs when we depart automatically so we should be ok although they can sometimes do random checks…”

“ Unless your on their wanted list,” He joked causing Sofia and Stephen to chuckle in the back of the limousine.

“Yeah well we are good guys ,” quipped Stephen.” I haven’t been in trouble for years and never in the United States…”

Both Sofia and Stephen smiled nervously at each other then both gasped as the car banked and joined a downward spiral of cars that were landing at the gates of the Pasadena Landing Zone. Soon it was their turn and the car came to a gentle hovering halt and Mark the Driver took control and drove it like any car but he used a side stick instead of a steering wheel towards the Security checkpoints. A security guard scanned the car number plate and looked at the driver and then briefly at Stephen and Sophia before indicating a thumbs to his colleague in the booth and the gate opened up and the lights went green.

“ Looks like your both ok,” joked the driver as they smoothly drove through the gate and turned onto the main road. From there they soon joined the main highway with all the normal traffic. Stephen saw Sofia breath a sigh of relief probably and he smiled and winked at her. Within a few minutes they turned onto Los Robles Avenue and the Driver told them they were nearly there and in a few seconds they pulled up at the entrance of the hotel. Mark their Driver got out and opened the doors for them then went to fetch their two cases whilst Stephen picked a twenty dollar note from his wallet and gave it to their friendly driver.

“ You don’t have to a gratuity tip is part of the Bill,” replied Mark.

Stephen made sure their Driver took it and said,” Mark it was a pleasure, we both loved it so I insist you take this, pleas?”

The happy driver headed off and Stephen and Sofia turned and headed into the hotel lobby which was quite busy and they both went to the reception desk. As the receptionist checked their passports they both heard Branion over their comms system.

“Two men sitting between the reception and the elevators are in radio contact with Kamen and said they had spotted you.”

Stephen casually looked around the area and clocked the two men sitting by a table and were evidently harmlessly chatting with each other. They were dressed in a nondescript smart casual and could be tourists or perhaps businessmen.. Sofia did the same and then winked at Stephen who then smiled as the receptionist offered them their room cards. When the girl told them the two room numbers Stephen feigned horror.

“ I am very sorry but those two numbers 47 and 48 are my families unlucky numbers and we cannot stay in these rooms I was going to say … can we have different rooms on a different floor? I am happy to pay extra, “ he said apologetically. “ However we could happily go elsewhere if you cannot accommodate us.”

He then put four hundred dollars in front of the girl, “ this is for your trouble and if the rooms are any extra just put it all on my bill.”

The girl looked horrified at first but quickly recovered and smiled at them both ,” No need to worry just let me check for you…I am sorry about that glitch..”

Stephen smiled warmly,” Look its not your fault we didn’t make the booking ourselves and our people must have slipped up and not told your people.”

The girl checked her screens and quickly came back to Stephen and Sofia, “Would rooms 66 and 67 on floor five be suitable they are our classic rooms and slightly more per night.”

Stephen pushed the money further towards the Girl, smiled warmly and noting her name badge said ,” Is there another two rooms perhaps higher up with a better view of Pasadena Helen?”

After another minute the girl offered them two other rooms on the eight floor and Stephen was very happy,” That would be wonderful Helen and we would be so grateful.”

They accepted the new room cards and slowly headed towards the lifts to the right of the reception as they got to them Stephen looked back and watched one of their Unity minders get up and approach the Reception desk. Stephen looked back at Sofia and had to surpress a giggle but she had realised what he had just done and why and she smiled and winked at him.

“That was brilliant,” she whispered.

“ That was ace Stephen,” they could also hear Stuart giggling over the comms.

“ A masterstroke,” echoed Branion.

They quickly went up to the eighth Floor and found their new rooms but never said a word until they both entered Sofias room. When they did Sofia hugged Stephen.

“Is it safe to speak?” she asked.

Stephen quickly kissed Sofia,” I think so for now, I assumed they mighr have had a pair of back up rooms also rigged up just in case which is why I refused the second rooms. So for now we are ok but even so lets watch what we say, however remember we are going out for a meal tonight so you can almost guarantee these rooms will be fully bugged by the time we come back.”

“ So you have a plan B in mind for later?” mused Sofia still hugging Stephen.

“Plan B for today was the last second room switch to mess with their plans,” chuckled Stephen. “ Tonight will be Plan C my dearest.”

“Can you tell me?” she asked.

“ Just think of Captain kirk ,” teased Stephen.” Look…ok”

Stephen then whispered in her ear and she giggled.

Just then Brannion told them, “ The Unity minders are not happy Doctor Kamen said you made fools of them and he should perhaps employ you as his security adviser Stephen.”

Sofia patted Stephens chest,” I am proud of my Belfast Boy.”

“ Yeah nice one Uncle Stephen,” agreed Stuart.

“ Ok Sofia it is now 6pm I will go to my room and call for you at 7pm be ready as I said and carry what I said honey.”

Sofia kissed Stephen and broke away,” I will Be ready.”

Stephen went to his room and put his case on the bed he quickly lifted out the Obsidian crystals and put them in his shoulder bag along with a few other items then he changed his top for a lightweight short sleeved black shirt. He then went to rooms fridge and got himself a bottle of water and sat down in a comfy chair by the window from where he could see downtown Pasadena below.

“ What have we learned Branion?” he asked sofly.

“You really upset them,” came the reply.” We now know they have the two men in the lobby and four more in a van just outside and they have two more agents in another back up vehicle. We know they have called for some technicians to be ready to bug your new rooms as soon as they can if need be they will pretend to be tradesmen and visit your rooms under some pretext. We even know they are going to be replaced by a fresh team at 6pm and then another team 8 hours after that. They are quite free with their radio chatter and obviously don’t expect to be eaves dropped on by anyone else.”

“They are used to being the top dogs around here,” surmised Stephen.” They have grown complacent, which is a good thing for us.”

Stephen then sat back and took his mobile phone out and activated its holographic viewing screen and selected a local news channel too watch and tried to relax but his mind raced with all the possibilities of what should and what might actually happen. He then selected music channels and watched a selection of music videos from the !98o’s and 1990’s and that helped him to relax and passed the time.

At fifteen minutes to seven he went to the bathroom and brushed his teeth and sprayed some mens cologne on and picking up his shoulder bag he left the room. He tapped on Sofia’s door and grinned happily when she answered it and he noticed she had changed he top for a loose fitting cream coloured top.

“ Hi honey are you ready to go on our date then,” he asked cheerfully.

“ Is that what this is?” she answered with an almost Vulcan like tone of indifference. She then cracked though and smiled warmly.

“Let’s go,” she chuckled and reaching over she hugged Stephen, then picked up her own shoulder bag and they walked to the elevators. In the elevator Sofia noticed Stephen checking out the elevators ceiling panels.

“ What’s so fascinating?” she enquired.

“You have to remember Nakatomi Tower and see if there is a escape hatch in the Elevators,” he quipped.” I always look in any elevator I get in.”

Sofia realised what the reference meant and smiling she shook her head,” You mean from the movie Die Hard?”

Stephen nodded as the Elevator descended,” Best Christmas movie ever..”

Sofia giggled as the elevator stopped at the ground floor and as they left Stephen held her hand in his.

“ And there is a ceiling panel too,” added Stephen with a chuckle.

They walked leisurely past the two unity undercover agents still sitting at the table near the reception and out of the hotels doors and turned right and headed down the road then turned right again and headed towards the beautiful City hall with its lovely green dome.

“The two agents in reception radioed in your exit and two other teams are going to follow you one on foot and the other in the back up vehicle,” Brannion informed them.” They have also called in the technicians to bug and search your new rooms in your absence.”

“ As predicted,” replied Stephen who then smiled at Sofia and winked confidently. As they neared the city hall they started to notice barriers set up along the road and street vendors were setting up food or various other stalls on the kerbside. Stephen remembered the local news he had watched earlier.

“Oh its for the Pasadena City Festival this weekend and there is a big parade tonight,” he remembered .” It starts in the park we went to the other day and snakes all round the town and finishes in another park for a concert on the southside they said it will last a good two hours and the police were clearing the rout of parked cars. They showed pictures of last years and it was very colourful bands majorettes floats lots of people in fancy dress walking around.”

“ Like a Rio Mardi Gras?” mused Sofia and Stephen nodded as they walked along. Stephen then pointed to a ice cream vendor and looked at Sofia.

“ We can ask if they do vegan for you,” he suggested.

They then bought two ice creams and whilst they did Stephen used the opportunity too look around and see if he could see who was following them now.

A voice in his ear which he recognised as Toreq informed him,” The two guys about 50 metres back by the bus stop..”

Stephen licked his icream and observed,” no buses today as the streets are closed for the parade until 10pm they said…”

He glanced back and saw them both average guys mid-thirties wearing casual clothes chatting to each other as they waited for their non-existent bus. He and Sofia crossed the road and headed south until they reached the East Colorado Boulevard which was also being roped off and cleared by the police. As they walked along this road at a gentle pace they ate their ice creams and looked at all the various shops just like any normal tourist might do.

“ The parade must come here too,” observed Sofia.

Stephen nodded , “ they showed a picture on the news to warn drivers where to avoid. It basically meanders all around the town between 8 until 10pm.”

Sofia smiled and then pointed her ice cream cone ahead,” the Cheescake Factory isn’t that where we are going?”

Stephen nodded and watched as people were starting to gather along the Kerbside for the forthcoming parade and those had obviously came before were prepared with collapsible camping chairs and stools and even picnic hampers. It was all very happy and colourful and infectious both Stephen and Sofia found themselves smiling and nodding to people as they ambled along. After crossing one more road they arrived at the Cheesecake Factory and Stephen introduced himself to the girl who was greeting people as they entered.

“ Yes mister Mccloughlin we have you r window table reserved and its upstairs so you will get a good view of the parade ,” she announced happily. “ Christine will take you up and take your orders…Please enjoy yourselves.”

As if by magic the other girl appeared from nowhere and escorted them through the restaurant and up the stairs,,

“ Your lucky you booked a table as we are full tonight with lots of people coming for the festival,” she told them.” Have you been with us before?”

“ Yes but it seems like nearly Half a century ago now,” joked Stephen to Sofia’s amusement .

The girl laughed too not realising Stephen was actually telling the truth and showed them to a nice table by the window overlooking the parade route below. Stephen ordered a mojito for himself and coke for Sofia and they both sat down and Stephen showed Sofia the very extensive menu which had an extensive section for vegans.

“ No sign of our friends,” she mused as she scanned the menu.

“ They cannot get a table so are sat at the bar downstairs watching the stairs,” commented Toreq over the comms ring channel. ”There are 4 more in two vehicles in the street next to the restaurant within 30 metres of you

“The parade is started, ” noted Stephen as he looked down and a colourful band marched up the street playing some tune they couldn’t hear, after this came a series of floats depicting various historical events in Pasadenas history. Lots of people were marching behind each of the floats and many of these were dressed up as famous characters or even cartoon characters whilst others weren’t and were just part of the club or society the float represented.

“ Oh look majorettes ,” pointed out Sofia who found the event strangely fascinating and sides of the road had truly filled up now as many people arrived to also see and follow the parade. The girl arrived back with the drinks and they placed their orders. Stephen ordered Buffalo Wings for starters whilst Sofia had a Caesar s salad with Stephen having a rib eye steak and Sofia had a Veggie Burger for their main course. After that they both laughed and watched the parade below as the many colourful floats and more bands and thousands of people steadily marched by. Then to their amazement the skies opened and it started to rain and it was quiet heavy however the Parade went on and many of the crowds ling the sides of the rode put umbrellas up and carried on.

“ Wow!” exclaimed Stephen.” In all my visits I never saw it rain before in LA.”

“They must be used to it by now as look how many have umbrellas at the ready,” observed Sofia.” It’s not even phasing them at all.”

“It’s the first time I even saw an umbrella here,” chuckled Stephen.

Their starters arrived and they both tucked in … and chatted about their early lives in St Petersburg for Sofia and Belfast for Stephen. ……………………………………….

The meals went well and after the main course was done they opted for the vegan dairy free vanilla and strawberry cheesecakes whilst outside in the pouring rain the parade continued. Stephen ordered another round of drinks and then after this he made the signature La cuenta sign to the indicate settling the account. He settled the account with his card but gave the girl a forty dollars in cash as a tip on top then nodded to Sofia it was time to make their move.

Seeing them get up on the scanners Toreq cautioned them ,”Your two friends are still at the bar and four others outside in two vehicles I will keep you informed of their positions.”

“Gotcha,” murmured Sofia gratefully.

Stephen turned to Sofia as they went down the stairs and ignored the the unity agents at the bar and whispered ,” Look we are going to get wet but its still 32 degrees C so warm. Just stay with me honey.”

Sofia nodded and they both moved towards the door and headed out into the heavy rain and they both laughed as it was strange as even the rain felt warm and it just felt weird. They immediately turned right and headed slowly back the way they had come towards their hotel.

“ Your two friends are slowly following you and two of the others have got out of their vehicle and are following as well. The other vehicle has moved off and is heading in the same direction but avoiding the roads blocked for the parade, “announced Toreq.

Stephen and Sofia walked along parallel to the parade then Stephen seeing a gap in the crowd moved to the kerbside with Sofia and paused to watch the parade . A large band came past playing a noisy jazz musical followed by hundreds of people many in fancy dress dancing along in the rain to the music. Their enthusiasm was not dampened by the downfall and Stephen took Sofia by the hand and stepped out and joined with the marching crowd and dancing as they did. The two Unity agents found their way blocked on the Kerbside as other people moved into fill the gap Sofia and Stephen had left.

“ They are confused and are paused ,” Stated Toreq…

The parade with Sofia and Stephen now a part of it kept moving along..

“Two of them have now joined the parade but they are well back now and the other two are trying to keep up with where they think you are on the pavement, “stated Toreq.

“ Ok keep down Sofia, “urged Stephen who now stooped low and cut across with Sofia holding his hand to the other side of the parade. He then spotted another gap and darted through the crowd on the roadside and then headed back the way they had come on the opposite side of the road. They had walked slowly before but now with their heads down they moved quickly and hopefully covertly.

“ They haven’t noticed yet,” advised Toreq.” The two in the parade are still trying to get closer to where you were and the ones on the opposite side of the road didn’t spot your move and are still heading the same way as the parade.”

Stephen looked at Sofia and grinned as she had heard the good news too he then spotted an umbrella lying on the ground and leaned down picked it up and opened it and pulling Sofia closer to him. He brought the umbrella down very close to help hide them. After another minute they where now back and almost opposite the Cheescake factory

“Good thinking, they now realise they have lost you and are asking for the cctv operators too look for you two now , “ Said Toreq.” However they are still heading in the wrong direction assuming your heading the quickest way back to the hotel.”

They carried on down well past the Cheesecake factory and then re crossed the road and cut through the Parade, Stephen quickly led Sofia down a side road and through a alleyway he had used the other day on their brief visit. They were heading away from the parade now but its music could still be heard Stephen took several more turns then they crossed South Marengo avenue and approached the Pasadena conference Center and the Sheraton hotel. They quickly entered the hotel foyer and stopped retracting the umbrella. They were still soaked through and they booth looked at each other and both started to giggle. Stephen hugged and kissed Sofia.

“ I am soaked,” laughed Sofia .” It’s strange….but I am not cold… it was warm rain .”

“ I know, “ chuckled Stephen. “ I had this in Belize in Central America years ago warm tropical rain…but now here in LA. It is mental!”

He then indicated to Sofia not to say anything as they approached the new reception desk

Stephen smiled at the guy on the Desk and passed him a card and Passport,” We got caught watching the Parade…In the rain.”

The receptionist smiled and asked,” I can have the porter get your bags.”

Stephen chuckled ,”No worries they are in the car we can book in then I will get them.”

“ No worries sir,” said the receptionist . Who then checked Stephens credit card and Passport and scanned them into his machine..” Ok we have a standard room 103 in the fifth floor for you Mister James T….”

“ Tiberius … That’s James Tiberius Kirk,” said Stephen happily.” and after this could we have an upgrade do you think? I am happy to pay extra.”

Stephen once more casually pushed three hundred dollar to the Receptionist and he then glanced at Sofia who was obviously trying to not laugh and had to turn away.

“ No that’s fine Mister Kirk we can give you one of our Ambassador suites that’s rom 201 on the 10th floor the lifts are just around the corner.”

Stephen smiled warmly again,” Thank you but it’s Jim okay I prefer to be called Jim.”

The receptionist handed him two room cards and happily accepted the money .

“ Well Jim Room service is open twenty four seven just ring down for anything you want I can assure you we are at your disposal.”

“ Thanks !!” said Stephen as warmly as he could and Taking Sofia by the hand he led her to the elevators. Once inside he hit the button for the 10th floor and as before he again looked up at the lifts ceiling panels.

Sofia chuckled , “ Ok I get it Nakatomi Die hard But James T Kirk ! ??”

Stephen suppressed a smile,” Ever since I was a kid I dreamed of saying that Sofia.”

Sofia shook her head in mock disbelief but still reached up and pulling Stephen towards her and kissed him “ Your unbelievable Stephen.”

“In a good way ?” he queried.

Sofia nodded and smiled,….” Yes In a good way.”

Stephen mock punched the air in a sign of triumph but then as the lift reached the 10th floor he asked ,”So Toreq where are our friends now.”

“They are in a blind panic,” announced Toreq.” Some think you may have gone back to the Westin Hotel and believe the agents there may have missed you. However they can’t detect you in the room its seems they have cameras in the rooms now, they are not sure if they are malfunctioning or not. They are not sure what to do…”

“ Look if they come here ring us on our phones Toreq or in any emergency but we are going to turn our comms rings off for the night soon ok?”

“Brannion would not approve Stephen,” said Toreq.

“ Give us a break Toreq.” Implored Sofia.” We will check in before we turn them off.”

“ I can understand Sofia…I will use your phones in an emergency, ”replied the Vulcan.

They then left the elevator and went to their room, Once inside Sofia went to the Bathroom and Stephen Took his jacket and wet shirt off and jeans off. Sofia soon emerged from the bathroom dressed in a thick cosy looking bathrobe and carrying another she handed another to Stephen.

“ There ‘s a heated towel rack in there I have switched it on and hung my clothed on,” she said as she dried her hair with a towel. Stephen nodded and picked up his clothes and hung them up in the bathroom as well. He went to his shoulder bag and lifted out a dry clean t-shirt socks and boxers for tomorrow as well as his soap bag . Sofia had done the same and just as he turned to her phone bleeped and they both froze.. Sofia picked it up and looked ..

“ It’s a message from Doctor Kamen,” she said.” He askss is everything ready for tomorrow? To let him know if we need anything…. he is worried.”

Stephen smiled ,” He is panicking his guys lost us….Text and Tell him we got caught in the rain storm and took the quickest way back to the hotel cutting through the parade …joke about it. Tell him we went in the rear doors as they were nearer than walking around to the front entrance and took the backstairs up to our rooms as they were by the rear entrance. We are both tired and jet lagged so we are going to sleep. Be nice but tell him your going to sleep and we will see him tomorrow. As planned”

“ Is that right about the rear entrance and stairs?” she queried.

“ Trust me Sofia I stayed there before and I checked the hotel brochure earlier on, the rear entrance and stairs are still there and in use… Oh and Tell him Stephen ie me wants to be the Unity rep for the Northern Ireland Operation…he will like that… “

Sofia nodded and started to text the message.

”and afterwards turn your phone off, Toreq will ring both mine and yours in a emergency and my alarm is set for 9am so that will do…

Stephen then sat on the bed and put on the complimentary warm slippers and slid the other pair to Sofia who smiled back as she sent the message. Stephen then went to the phone by the bed and rang room service and ordered a large bottle of chilled champagne. Shortly after Sofia’s Phone beeped again and she checked the message.

“High Sofia glad your both well and safe you should have let us take you both out for the night. Our driver will be there at 11am and we are so looking forward to meeting you both. You can tell Stephen there could be senior positions in our company plus many rewards if all goes well for both of you. See you tomorrow Alexander.”

Stephen smiled ,” Bingo…you did it babe.”

He walked over and put his arms around Sofia and gently hugged her.

“ We did it together Stephen,” she added.

“ Well that calls for a celebration and its only nine thirty..yet.”

“ That was amazing today and the whole loosing those guys was like movie stuff…It was like Bladerunner in the rain in the futuristic city with hover cars…a real adventure… I could never have dreamed such a thing could happen even a week ago,” Mused Sofia hugging Stephen.

“It was fun, wasn’t it ?” chuckled Stephen.

Sofia looked up at him and smiled, ”It was fun…”

Just then there was a tap at the door and Stephen went over and opened it and a waiter pushed in a trolley with a large bottle of champagne in a silver ice bucket and two glasses.

“Where would you like it sir?” asked the waiter.

Stephen pointed to the coffee table in front of the luxurious leather settee and then went to his wallet. The waiter went over to the coffee table and transferred everything from the trolley then expertly popped the champagne and filled the two glasses. Stephen gave him forty dollars as a tip and when he left Stephen and Sofia went to the Settee and sat down they both picked up and chinked their glasses .

“ To our successful adventure,” said Sofia smiling broadly.

“ Our adventure,” echoed Stephen who then took a large sip.

Sofia sat back and visibly relaxed now. “ I still find it hard to believe everything that has happened to us and in such a short space of time.”

“ Before this happened I wanted to bring you here to Pasadena for a movie convention,” chuckled Stephen .” then I wanted to take you to the Star trek convention in Las Vegas.”

“ We can still go when all this is over,” she mused.” After this Stephen your not going anywhere without me.”

Stephen took another sip of champagne and leaning across he kissed Sofia.

A soft gentle kiss and she kissed him back but then she broke off …” I think we should check in with Toreq one last time..”

“I am glad you said that ,” announced Toreq instantly over their ring comms.” I was going to tell you Doctor Kamen swallowed your ruse. He was very angry with his men and told them to post two more by the rear stairs and entranceway and dismissed all their excuses and worries. I will monitor them until Branion comes in but I feel you can relax and if need s be I will ring your phone Stephen…good night.”

“ Good night my dear Friend,” said Sofia.” We will turn our rings off now.”

Stephen and Sofia then pushed the buttons on the rings then Stephen topped up their glasses and they relaxed. Sofia asked Stephen about his previous trips to Pasadena for the Monsterpalooza Horror monster conventions. He told her lots of funny stories about his mad adventures just yards from where they were sitting now and of getting drunk in the downstairs bar and in the Westin. They both laughed at his funny stories and were totally relaxed and content in each others company they then discussed how their love for sci fi lead them here and how it began for each of them. Stephen told Sofia when they were kids they didn’t have a telly but they used to be taken to the movies on a Saturday morning and he loved the sci fi films such as Doctor Who and the Daleks and War of the Worlds, For Sofia it was her mother’s books and her first one was Aelita by Alexi Tolstoy that had set her down the road that led her here.

“ I liked it because the hero was Los an engineer like me who made the ship that they flew to Mars and he fell in love with Aelita,” added Stephen.” It was better than the movie which ended with Los waking up and realising it had been a dream. In the book it was real and Los back on earth hears a radio broadcast from Mars and realises it is his beloved Aelita she is still alive….”

“ I like to think he would go back for her,” said Sofia a little sadly.

“ If I was Los and you my Aelita I would have gone back for you Sofia,” said Stephen gently.

Sofia slide along the Leather settee and hugged Stephen.

” Your lovely Stephen,” she said and he leaned down and kissed her ever so gently. Their lips met and he sighed as he could breathe in her fragrance. Their kiss slowly intensified, Sofia put her arms around Stephen and hugged him tighter. She carried on kissing him as he pulled the cord on her bathrobe loose and he ran his hand inside her robe and gently stroked her back. She gasped as she felt him teasingly stroke her back and side….

“ Time for Bed ,” she murmured with a gentle knowing smile..

Chapter 10,

When Stephen woke he rolled over and was sad to see Sofia was no longer there and he guessed from the sound coming from the bathroom she was already in the shower. He stretched and smiled as he recalled the nights events, he checked the time and seeing it was eight thirty he reached over and turned his phone alarm off. Just then Sofia walked back in almost absentmindedly drying her hair with a towel wearing just some sexy black panties.

“ You are gorgeous Sofia,” he said happily ,” I must have died and woke up in heaven.”

Sofia laughed as she sat down on the chair in front of the dresser and began to brush her hair and Stephen got up off the bed and walked naked to the bathroom.

“ You have a nice bum,” commented Sofia.

“ It’s all yours!” called Stephen as he climbed into the shower. After Stephen showered shaved and brushed his teeth he emerged from the bathroom carrying his now dry clothes. Sofia was now dressed in her also now dry Jeans but a fresh Blue top and Stephen quickly dressed in fresh boxers socks his dry jeans and a fresh black Tshirt. They both quickly packed their gear back in their respective bags and the Stephen stepped closer to Sofia and took both her hands in his.

“ Once we step out of here we have to play our roles Sofia,” he said with a sad tone.

Sofia slowly nodded, “ I know and it will be harder now.”

She then hugged him and they again kissed with a fierce passion and when they broke apart she rested her head on his chest and sniffed the air recognising and smiling at his choice of men’s cologne that she now accepted as his unique Stevie smell. She quickly kissed him and then stepped back and smiled genuinely at him.

“ That will do till we get back on the ship,” she said.

Stephen nodded then held up his right hand,” Shall we activate our Rings then and let the boys listen in.”

Sofia smiled and chuckled ,” I am glad they couldn’t listen in last night.”

Stephen nodded and laughed in agreement then they both activated their rings.

“Good morning guys,” said Sofia after activating her ring.

“ I am glad you re-joined us,” came the familiar voice of Brannion.

“We are going to head back the Westin Hotel and have breakfast there,” added Stephen.

“Well there has been a few good developments,” added Branion.

“Pleas e tell us?” asked Sofia happy to hear good news.

“I Have been studying their comms system the Unity Corporation agents and the all their guards use a ear piece design which I can easily intercept and eaves drop on,” continued Branion.” I believe I could easily induce a backfeeed and overload on a specific individual or group or any in a given area.”

“ What could that do?” asked Stephen.

“I could induce a painful shock or a higher instantaneous one that could effect a subject or any number we want to effect them …to loose consciousness…”

“ We can knock them out,” cut in Stuart.

“ Yes we can Knock them out,” agreed Brannion.” I have also access to the Hotel cctv and the cctv for the Unity corporations buildings and target site.”

“ Well done,” said Sofia.” That could be handy later on.”

“ Yes ,” agreed Stephen. “ When they realise we have taken over the lab and if they try and break in you can take them all out.”

“ When you approach the Westin and the rear entrance by the restaurant I can use it to distract the two gaurds who are watching the stairs and that entrance,” continued Brannion.” It can be a minor test of our capabilities.”

“Ok lets do it,” agreed Sofia.

“Yes,” agreed Stephen.” We will pause by the entrance and you can tell us what to do.”

With that Stephen and Sofia left their room and going down checked out as Mr and Mrs Kirk which caused Sofia to giggle again as they left the hotel. It was a warm sunny morning and they both walked towards the city hall and then the Westin Hotel. They entered the hotels rear garden and approached the rear entrance but paused just to once side.

“ Ok wait till I say…” Cautioned Brannion.

Brannion on the Bridge of the Timeship had the rear lobby of the hotel on the Main Bridge screen using the hotels own cctv system. He could clearly see the rear entrance and the door to the stairs and opposite that was the doors to the restaurant. He could also clearly see the two agents sitting and amicably chatting as various people strolled past them to on either side of the lobby. Brannion looked to Stuart and Toreq who stood next to him and smiled and as the smiling Stuart gave him a thumbs up.

Branion then hit a button and they watched as both agents jumped to their feet and holding their ears and they then collapsed. People nearby rushed to help them and Branion told Stephen And Sofia,” Now move quickly and quietly .”

Before he finished the sentence he saw Sofia and Stephen slip through and enter the restaurant as the two agents werebeing helped to their feet. Both men had ripped their ear pieces out and looked a bit shaken.

“ I think we can call that a success,” commented Brannion amicably.

In the restaurant Stephen and Sofia opted for a healthy mixed fruit and vegan Yoghurt for their main breakfast with Stephen also having toast and Tea whilst Sofia was happy with just fruit juices to drink When they were done they left the restaurant they could see the two agents having a heated discussion with a third man. One of them was waving his ear piece angrily at the third man who then looked slightly shocked at Stephen and Sofia appearance.

“Morning guys! “ said Stephen loudly and cheerfully to the men who all stopped arguing and the third man tried to nod cheerfully back at Stephen.

“ Good morning,” echoed Sofia.

They both crossed the Lobby and went through the doorway to the staircase and headed up the stairs and both tried not to giggle. They both reached their rooms and nodded then entered their rooms

“ I disarmed the cameras in the rooms soon after they fitted them,” Brannion said.” So they couldn’t be sure if you were there or not. I also induced a few noises sporadically early on so it sounded like you were both moving around…So remember they can still listen in.”

It was now nearly ten thirty in the morning and Stephen quickly went to his travel bag and took out the grey trousers black shirt and grey lightweight suit jacket and quickly changed into them. The jacket and Trousers had been replicated from one he found on the internet made by Magees a famous Irish tailor that Stephen had been pleased to find was still in business in 2150 when he had found them on the internet the other day. Stephen remembered fondly his dad had been a tailor in Belfast at Magee’s and his mum had been a seamstress there and that’s where they met. He then checked himself out and was pleased how it looked on him .

“ Cheers Dad and cheers Mum,” he whispered as he then placed his pen and wallet and passport in his inside suit pocket and his mobile phone in his trouser pocket.

“ If you both place everything else in your case and leave it on your bed we can transport them out after you leave,” said Toreq.

“ And just so you know when the operation is over as you are transported out I will initiate an automatic timeslip 12 hours into their future and to a different location,” added Brannion. “Our ship cannot be detected by any present human detection systems but I cannot be sure of the Melkorne systems or even if there are any. However as they possess time travel capability it is possible they have the ability to detect us once they are alerted and we have attacked them.”

“ Time to go,” suggested Toreq. “ When you go to their Hovercar turn your comms rings off and do not turn them on again until you are in their Lab.”

“Good luck you two ,” chimed in Stuart.” Remember Plan A use the phones Plan B will be the Pens and comms rings..If all else fails then we go to plan C we can beam you both out at a moment’s notice and destroy the lab from here. I will be locked onto your comms rings signal at all times and ready on the transporter controls..”

Stephen had to force himself not to chuckle as he heard Toreq chide Stuart,” We don’t say Beam you out…that’s TV Star Trek Stuart.”

“This whole thing is fucking Star Trek,” Stuart responded amicably.

Stephen quietly laughed as he picked up his shoulder bag now containing only the 50 Obsidian Crystals, he left the room and then tapped on Sofia’s door. She opened the door and looked him up and down.

“ Very Smart Stephen,” she observed.

“ It’s a Magee’s suit,” he replied with an air of pride.” They were the finest Tailors in Ireland and are still in Business in 2150 after 160 years . My dad was a tailor there and mum a seamstress.”

Sofia smiled warmly she was wearing a smart expensive looking ladies business suit comprising a medium blue matching jacket and trousers with a cream shirt and she looked the part. “Looking really good Doctor,” said Stephen.

Sofia Smiled at the compliment,” Doctor Kamen both texted and rang me and he said the car should be downstairs. I Have the University reports on the obsidian finds in my bag. “

She then nodded towards the bed where her main case was now obviously packed and ready for teleporting.

“Mine too,” agreed Stephen.” Shall we go?”

Sofia stepped out of her room and shut the door behind her and the two of them strolled towards the elevators. When they stepped into the Elevator Stephen Smiled as he saw Sofia check out the ceiling service panel in its roof and she saw him looking and they both giggled.

“ We have to be serious now Stephen,” she said in mock serious tone..

“ I am trying,” giggled Stephen.

When the elevator arrived at the ground floor they both stepped out into reception which was quite busy but Stephen immediately spotted the very large man standing in the middle of it and recognised him as Taurus who was Malachi Utticks bodyguard. This man was easily 6 and a half feet tall and built like a bear with a short black beard and shortly cropped black hair. The big man saw Stephen and Sofia and smiling he walked towards them.

“ Smile, relax and turn your ring off,” whispered Stephen to Sofia who deliberately began to laugh as if they shared a joke.

Taurus looked to Sofia and bowed , “ Doctor Ivanov ..I am Taurus and was asked to meet you and make sure you got safely to Mister Uttick whom I personally work for.”

Sofia smiled,” Thank you Taurus.”

Taurus turned to Stephen and still smiling broadly he offered his hand,” Mister Mccloughlin I am honoured to meet you too .”   
 Stephen happily shook Taurus hand and laughed again,” This is really wonderful to be greeted so.”

“I can say Mister Uttick is so excited to meet you both and by your discovery Mister Mccloughlin I have never seen him so excited before,” said the big man who was still shaking Stephens hand. As he waved them to follow him the big guy led them out of the hotels entrance and they saw their Transport.

“ It s the latest Bentley limousine,” Said Taurus proudly. As they approached the driver must have hit a button as the two rear doors opened revealing a luxurious leather clad interior. It had two bench type seats that faced each other and could very comfortably seat six then in front of that was a separate compartment that could seat another 3 whilst up front sat the driver and room for another beside him. It looked magnificent a mixture of the latest technology but the looks and feel of a classic Bentley luxury car. Taurus watched them both get in and showed Sofia how the seat strap worked then he climbed in the compartment in front of them,

“ Are you both comfortable?” asked Taurus over a intercom.” We will fly direct from here.”

The driver obviously flicked a switch and the Bentley smoothly and noiselessly started to lift up higher and higher and at then when it reached perhaps twenty feet it started to move forward. Within a minute they were at around 200ft and climbing faster now and the Bentley banked gently and turned and headed now in a south westerly direction.

“Pasadena looks so clean and beautiful,” observed Sofia as they flew quickly and smoothly over the streets and houses below. Within a few minutes they could see a large green area and within it were many shiny new modern buildings.

“That whole area is CalTech and that runs Nasas Jet propulsion Laboratory and the Unity corporation has rebuilt and expanded the Universitry employing thousands now . You can just see the domed building we will pass and this is the world’s first operational fusion reactor power station,” stated Taurus proudly

Stephen looked and he saw this portion of the facility was surrounded by various fences and a large wall with regular guard Towers and checkpoints.

“ Across from it is the Energy Research Lab where the obsidian research is going on and we will meet mister Uttick and Doctor Kamen and Doctor Bryce…there ”Taurus explained.

Sofia and Stephen looked and could see perhaps a half a mile away was another sealed compound surrounded by a another large wall with watchtowers on it and several other fences ringing it on the outside and inside. Stephen noted there was only one checkpoint into it and the Bentley banked smoothly and began to descend circling the oblong three story building twice which he recognised from the internet pictures he had found and the Ships own scans. The Bentley came down to road level and smoothly transited and drove to the checkpoint which was manned by several guards and flanked on either side by two guard towers. Stephen could see what appeared to be large calibre weapons in the towers. All the guards on the ground carried their carbines at the ready and looked keen and alert. The Bentley slowed and one guard approached and smiled at the driver he obviously knew the Taurus opened his window ,

“ Are we good Mister Taurus?” the guard asked.

“We are good and mister Utticks guests are keen to meet our leader,” Taurus replied.

The guard turned and gave the gatehouse the classic thumbs up signal Then Stephen watched as the Steel Gates descended vertically into slots in the road. They drove in past two more rings of fences past numerous guards and guard dog patrols, a staff car park which was mostly empty and then they approached the main building. Stephen looked at Sofia smiled and winked at her and was pleased she smiled back. Stephen recognised the roundabout in front of the complex and at the centre of it mounted on a plinth was the Unity Corporation sphere where they had planted one of the section 31 stealthy cameras. The Bentley smoothly pulled up in front of the large shiny building and they could see four armed guards who all appeared alert and suspicious. Taurus got out and the rear doors opened automatically and Sofia accepted Taurus hand to get out while Stephen slid out for himself.

The four guards stood to one side and made room for Taurus and his guests and they went in through the glass doors pf the entrance that slid open automatically as they approached. Once inside they where in a large reception area with lots of chairs and tables and signs for restrooms . directly opposite the entrance was a long desk and to one side of it was a airport like full body scanner that looked like a archway and beside it was another machine that also resembled the airport style bag scanner with a belt drive leading to it and a series of trays stacked beside it. Beyond these was a large double door obviously the way to the labs and workshops.

There were four guards in the reception all armed two were this side of the reception by the scanner and two behind it by the doors. At the reception desk was a smiling young lady and beside her sat an older man who was checking several monitors.

“ Luckily it’s a Saturday so only a few of us are here normally this place is very busy,” mentioned Taurus who then nodded to the young lady at the desk.

“ There is no need for form filling or passes Gwen, we are fully aware who our guests are and Mister Uttick is keen to meet them,” he said to the receptionist who got up and waved them to approach the scanners.

She pushed forward two trays one to each of them,

“Could you put your bags and any loose articles in them wallets, passports, pens, coins watches any loose jewellery in them,” she said in a very well-rehearsed tone.” Rings belts and shoes are fine you can keep them on as our full body scanner will scan them too. No electronic devices are allowed beyond this point though but any you have will be returned to you when you return. Do you have any phones, cameras or such things.”

“ Just my Phone,” replied Stephen happily handing his phone to the girl who smiled thanked him and looked at Sofia. Sofia nodded and reaching into her pocket produced her own phone which she also handed over to the girl and sighed as she mentally noted they were already on to plan B.

“ Is my jacket Ok ?” asked Stephen innocently.

The girl put their phones in a plastic bag and put them in a drawer.” No jackets and all clothing are fine our scanners are state of the art combining xray ultrasonic Spectrographic and emp detection technology. The Caltech archaeology department often send their archaeological finds here now to use our scanners to help analyse them which we think is fun.”

Once Stephen had put all his loose items in the tray he place his shoulder bag containing the Obsidian crystals on top, The girl then slide the tray along and on to the rubber belt of the scanner and nodded to the other guy at the reception desk who obviously activated it as the belt moved carrying the tray into the scanning machine. Stephen tried to look his most relaxed and confident and he grinned at everyone around him but he told himself the only thing in his tray that was suspect was his pen. After a few seconds his tray emerged from the other side of the machine and the man nodded back to Gwen.

“ Next Gwen,” he said in a relaxed manner and Stephen breathed a sigh of relief and wiped a bead of sweat from his head.

The girl then took Sofia’s Tray and passed it over to the rubber belt which carried it into the scanner but Stephen was relaxed as he knew it would get the all clear. Taurus then tapped Stephen on the shoulder and waved him towards the archway and the full body scanner,

“ Just slowly step through it Mister Mccloughlin its harmless, “he said in a friendly manner.

Stephen nodded and smiled again but he very was aware all four guards and Taurus had their eyes on him and their carbines were held at the ready.

Stephen then walked over and stepped thought the scanner and then he looked at Taurus who in turn looked at the man sat by the monitors who smiled and nodded back.

“ He is clear, he stated.

Taurus the turned to Sofia and beckoned her forward.

“ And now you too Doctor,” he said.” If you would be so kind and step though as well.”

Sofia had watched nervously as Stephen had stepped through the scanning archway but she was confident now it would be ok and she stepped forward . For his part Stephen had wondered what he would have done had it gone wrong and probably decided he would have activated the comms ring grabbed hold of Sofia and told Stuart to transport them out of there and resort plan C. Instead he smiled and watched as Sofia walked through and he relaxed as she also got the all clear. She was closely followed by Taurus and Stephen noticed a discreet light on the inside of the archway flashed red repeatedly as the big man passed through. Stephen then also noticed all the Guards immediately looked at the flashing light until he saw the man behind the desk obviously reach forward and touched a control and the light stopped flashing. He was sure this meant Taurus probably had a hand weapon on him probably under his jacket in a discreet shoulder holster Stephen clipped his pen in his trouser pocket where he could discreetly reach for it . He saw Sofia now reach for her tray and smiled and then patted his trouser pocket and Sofia seeing this nodded discreetly and did the same with her pen.

Taurus Then waved them forward and approached the formidable looking large steel double doors that silently slid open for them. Stephen and Sofia both walked through into the corridor beyond past various offices on either side.

“ We are right at the end, “said Taurus to them who then turned and told the guards to remain where they were , in the reception area.

Sofia smiled at Stephen and walked alongside him down the brightly lit corridor all the time thinking of what they had agreed to do. At any point when they thought they had gained all the intelligence they could and the time was right she or Stephen would innocently say …They had learned enough. That would be the signal then she would arm her pen and back away pretending to cough to distract them. Stephen would shoot Taurus and whoever was nearest him and she would shoot Uttick and whoever was left near him. Sofia knew what Uttick planned and what he had done in the past but she hoped Stephen would understand she was no killer and she had discussed with Toreq what she could possibly do differently.

At the end of the corridor were another set of formidable looking steel double doors which both Stephen and Sofia knew would lead them into the main lab. When they approached them Taurus went to a device on the wall and tapped a code into a keypad then pressed his hand against what they assumed was a scanner and the two doors slid slowly open. Taurus then turned back to Stephen and Sofia .

“After you both please,” he said happily.

With that they both stepped into the large and brightly lit laboratory and they both were pleased it loosely resembled the simulated lab they had used before but it seemed somewhat brighter and perhaps larger in real life. In the centre of the room by the various control panels that Sofia recognised were three men they both now knew t as Malachi Uttick Doctor Kamen and Doctor Bryce. Doctor Kamen smiled and walked over to meet them holding out his hand to Sofia.

“ I am so pleased you’re here at last Sofia ,” he gushed shaking Sofia’s hand warmly. He then turned and held his hand out for Stephen.

“Mister Mccloughlin this is a real pleasure,” he said.

Stephen shook his hand ,” Just Stephen will be fine.”

Kamen then turned and beckoned Sofia and Stephen over, “May I introduce to you both to Our Unity Corporations Chairman and owner Malachi Uttick and also my close work Colleague Doctor Allan Bryce.”

Then as they all exchanged handshakes and pleasantries Sofia took the opportunity to study the three men.

Doctor Kamen looked to be in his fifties and was dressed in the expected white dustcoat over a light blue shirt and black tie and black trousers, he seemed a slightly built man wearing thick dark glasses with grey thinning hair and of average height. Doctor Bryce was slightly taller also dressed in a white dustcoat and grey trouser, he appeared to be in mid forties. Bryce was also slightly overweight and he sported a short beard that matched his short red hair.

Malachi Uttick was around six feet tall and a powerfully built man. his dark hair cut short he was dressed immaculately in a silvery grey three piece suit with a black tie and he exuded power and confidence. He looked like a man who was used to things going his way and would not accept anything else.

“ I am so pleased to meet you both finally,” Uttick said warmly too them both. “ Alexander has told me all about you both and Mister Mccloughlin I must say your find could be just what we are looking for.”

Uttick then turned to Taurus and said , “Well done Taurus I think you can relax now.”

The big man then hit a button on the wall and after the steel doors slowly and noiselessly slid closed then he sat down by a desk just to one side and appeared quite relaxed.

“ So did you bring the Obsidian Crystals?” enquired Uttick who waved them over to a large workbench that had lots of futuristic machinery surrounding it. Stephen followed him and then placed his shoulder bag up on the bench and unzipping it he lifted out the pouch that contained the tightly packed crystals . Sofia followed along with Bryce and Kamen and she reached into her own bag and produced a folder.

“Fifty Obsidian Crystals or as the locals like to call it Dragon Glass,” said Stephen who opened the pouch and lifted one of the jet black crystals out and held it up to the light.

”This contains copies of the geology reports on the purity of the obsidian and estimates of the extent of the deposits, from Queens University,” Said Sofia placing the folder on the workbench beside the pouch. Kamen nodded to Bryce who stepped forward and picked up the folder, then he proceeded to open it and carefully look at its contents.

Uttick looked at Stephen and held out his hand to Stephen who smiled and cheerfully handed him the jet black crystal.

Uttick took the crystal and almost seemed to stroke it like one might stroke a favourite cat and then he too held it up to the light to study it.

“ I like that name,” he sighed.” Dragon Glass. …This appears truly magnificent I cannot see any flaws or any impurity in it at all.”

“ These reports all indicate exceptional purity,” Commented Bryce who was still studying the folders contents.” We haven’t seen anything nearly this pure in eons.”

Uttick then Handed the crystal to Doctor Kamen who placed it back on the bench and then produced a hand held scanner from his dustcoat pocket that Sofia and Stephen could see closely resembled those that they had seen Toreq use.

“ A Quite high Radion reading and almost 96.1 % in purity,” he said after a time then he looked to Stephen.” May I put it in our main scanner for a more complete test?”

“ Off course please go ahead,” replied Stephen happily to him.

Kamen then picked up the crystal and took it to a large machine and pressing a button a small door opened up and a tray slid out. Kamen placed the crystal on the tray and activated control. The tray slid back into the machine and the door closed then Kamen set it in operation then satisfied he looked back to Uttick.

“ It will take around twenty minutes for a full scan.

“ I am happy to wait for such an important test,” replied Uttick.

Sofia was quietly studying the Portal and the operating controls which were as in the simulation arranged in a line to the right of it and the laboratory as a whole. There was a number of offices to one side of the lab and loads of workbenches and various bits of machinery all around the walls but the centre of the lab was clear … perfect for Toreq to transport down to with the Quantum torpedoes she thought. Then there was the ramp up to the plinth upon which the Portal stood menacingly and both the ramp and the Portal definitely looked larger than the simulated one. Stephen pointed to the Portal and its two large C shaped arrays that were covered in Obsidian crystals that all appeared interconnected.

“So that’s what you want the Obsidion for?” he enquired innocently.

“ It is experimental but part off it,” explained Doctor Kamen.

“ My cousin Stuart told me his early research indicated Obsidion could be used to build up and release an electrical charge,” Mused Stephen. “ He said when a charge was applied the Obsidion caused attracted Nuetrinos to bend and collide and releasing energy by creating an electron.”

“Yes your cousins papers and research was on the ball,” commented Kamen.

“Stuart said the Obsidian samples he used where nowhere near as pure as these,” put in Sofia. “He said if he had access such samples as these and the knowledge he had such to a plentiful supply his research might have changed direction totally.”

“ Yes Doctor Mcloughlin’s research at Queens has revolutionised Power storage, batteries and the use of electrical power transmission,” agreed Doctor Kamen.

“ Even with 300 tons of Obsidian the reports indicate that are here, he made the right decision,” Added Doctor Bryce looking up from the report. “ His research into making and growing his own crystals led to the revolutionary breakthroughs today.. You would have needed a million tons of Obsidian to do the same that he has done now… Granted the tests on Obsidian led him to this his theory.”

“ So you can use Obsidian to ramp up the power considerably?” mused Stephen looking at the Portal in front of them. “ To what end though it looks like a powerful transmitter or receiver or perhaps both…..”

“ You were an Aircraft engineer?” asked Uttick.

Stephen nodded and smiled disarmingly,” Yes I love technology all technology and like all engineers I am always curious.”

“ You are remarkably close,” replied Uttick. “We are experimenting in teleportation and this device could truly revolutionise travel on a local and possibly even a cosmic scale.”

Sofia used this opportunity to gently walk over to the line of control machines and compare them to the ones she had practised on in the simulation and was pleased as it was close. Some colours and size of the controls were different but she was happy she could recognise them. She then pressed the button and activated her comms ring and then felt for the pen in her pocket. She looked over the controls and she was pleased the runic markings on the controls were identical and she could easily identify and understand them.

“ We can hear you both and will monitor everything,” she heard Brannion in her ear.

“ I am locked on both your signals,” Stuart added.” Just yell and I will teleport and I can get you both out at a moments notice.”

Sofia felt glad she could hear her friends and they could listen in and help them if needs be. She now felt more confident now in their plans and she looked to and was pleased to see Stephen smiling back at her and she realised he had activated his comms ring too.

“ So what does it do? Does it create a wormhole or a sort of cosmic gateway?” asked Stephen innocently.

“ We hope it wiil do something like that but we are a long way from that yet,” Lied Doctor Kamen almost convincingly.

“ So you have the absolute rights to exploit the finds and mine the obsidian from the landowners” asked Uttick of Stephen.

“One hundred Percent as long you meet their provisos… ,” replied Stephen.

“ And these are?” asked Uttick

“ Guaranteed Safeguards to local environment and historical beauty spots, also any operation must be used help the local economy and employment and they want a healthy percentage of the value of the Obsidian extracted,” answered Stephen. “ The locals can be very wary of foriegners exploiting them and have in the past resisted them.”

Uttick smiled back at Stephen and held his hands up in defensive gesture,” Once we have checked on the quality of the obsidian we can easily agree to all the safeguards you require. We can be very generous and I know the history of Ulster and I view your peoples pride and independent history with total respect.”

Uttick then place a hand on Stephens shoulder almost protectively.”

“ And what of you Stephen? What do you want from this?” he asked then turning to Sofia he also smiled.” You too Doctor Ivanov must realise we can be very grateful . We can be very generous and seeing how you both have the necessary local knowledge we could see a vital role in this operation for you both with the Unity Corporation as well as a generous bonus and finders fee for what you have both done already.”

Stephen started to say something but Uttick carried on.. “ I have some of my best lawyers working on a raft of proposals right now and tomorrow we can discuss them. Naturally we would have to send a team of our own to confirm everything you have told us about. Our team with Doctor Ivanov and the Queens University in Belfast could co operate in this new research and then engineering project. In effect the Unity Corporation could be very generous and help Queens University grow exponentially.”

He smiled at Sofia and Stephen and carried on enthusiastically, “ We would propose Sofia ..Doctor Ivanov would lead this team and when we move into production become our head in Europe for our operations. At the same time Stephen I have admired the way you have handled yourself you have been Discreet… you didn’t just roll over and I like and I need a man ike that.

We will need someone like you who is discreet who can understand the local needs and is a local to head up our operations. There will be tight deadlines we want 50 tons of Obsidian ready and extracted as soon as possible but we are willing to do and pay anything to make it happen and there will be immense rewards for you Stephen and the local economy. This could be the equivalent of the California gold Rush for northern Ireland. I could see you Stephen along with Doctor Bryce here being directly responsible to me though Doctor Kamen ..”

Just then a light flicked on and a buzzer sounded on the large machine which Kamen had placed the Obsidian crystal in.

“ The analyser is done ,” announced Kamen triumphantly who then walked over to the machine. He hit a button and a holographic screen appeared in front of the machine and he began to scroll through it . Stephen could see various charts appear and quickly noticed the script was of course in Norse Runic form once more.

“ This is exceptional,” stated Kamen. “ These are the best Obsidian Crystals we have seen for years. One of these crystals could easily generate nearly 40% more power and that would be more stable and with less chance of burning out. This means we could need less obsidian to proceed to the next stage and can speed up the final programme…”

“Yes! “ Uttick roared with delight and laughed.” May we see the other crystals now?”

“ Of course,” replied Stephen, who then went to the pouch that contained the other crystals and slowly took them out and spread them on the bench. Doctor Kamen then picked up his hand held scanner and turning it on he passed it over the crystals.

“ All these crystals are of similar purity and some are even are even of higher quality, this is amazingly good ,” he noted enthusiastically.

“ We will check them all in the analyser of course,” added Doctor Bryce.

Uttick roared with delight and stepping forward grabbed Stephens hand and shook it enthusiastically,” Mister McCloughlin you have made me a happy man today and Doctor Ivanov you will see how I can reward my friends and our allies. Today and tonight I insist you be my personnel guests at dinner we can enjoy a celebration then tomorrow with my legal experts we can hammer out a new deal and a new deal which can be successful beginning for us all..”

“ Tell me Mister Uttick is this apparatus able to function now at all?” asked Sofia innocently.

Uttick looked over to Doctor Kamen,” Could we power it up? Is it ready today for a demonstration for our valued guests.”

“ We are already booked with the Fusion reactor and could power the Portal in a few minutes if you want sir,” he replied to Mister Uttick.

“ Let’s use one of the new crystals and we can measure it and see for ourselves in action and what they can do,” suggested Uttick.

Kamen nodded then picked a sample one of their crystals and placed it inside a replicator then pulling up another holo screen he entered in a set of instructions then activated it. After a few seconds a ping sounded and Kamen lifted out the same crystal but now it sported a plug socket grafted on one end. He then walked over to the first of the SCPs as Stuart had named the pyramid shaped Super capacitors next to the plinth.

Stephen and Sofia watched as he lifted of the steel cover and they could see banks of the crystal s were arranged horizontally in a upside down pyramid formation. He then unplugged the bottom crystal which was on its own and replaced it with their new one that had come from the Mermaids cavern in Dunluce. He ran his hand held scanner over it and once satisfied he quickly replaced the cover.

“ Ok Allan. Ring the Fusion Reactor control room and tell them to activate the link and bring us online,” Kamen said to Doctor Bryce who quickly got hid mobile out and did so.” Tell them to give us two hours minimum.

Sofia breathed a sigh of relief as she realised she wouldn’t have been able to do that and they would have failed..

Kamen went to the first console that Sofia knew controlled the link with the nearby fusion reactor and Sofia carefully watched as he turned it on.

“ The fusion reactor was originally only rated at 1.5 megawatts but we have just modified so its happy to produce nearly 2.9 megawatts and in a short time we will double that, “ said Kramer matter of factly as Sofia watched and mentally noted every switch he touched.

“ The portal will open here but it will not be targeted,… so you couldn’t go anywhere,” Said Uttick to Stephen .” We use it to test the components and it needs only a fraction of the power.”

“ Ok Allan select the first Booster,” Said Doctor Kamen.” It has their crystal as the primary crystal source and we can see it power up and check the power readings and if there any suspicious power fluctuations.”

Sofia couldn’t help but smile as she realised what they had called a SCP Super Capacitor Pyramid the Melkorne just called it a Booster.

“ This technology is older than you think, “ said Uttick to Stephen as they watched Bryce bring the booster online and checked its readings as at powered up.

“ Its producing now 700 megawatts that’s a thirty six percent increase and its rock solid with no fluctuations,” Announced Bryce triumphantly.

“ This is so perfect Sir,” said a smiling Kamen to Uttick.

“ Then bring the Portal online,” urged Uttick.

Sofia stepped over and followed Kamen as he activated the Portal watching every move and quietly reading all the Runic symbols and read outs .. They could hear a low crackling noise growing slowly and Sofia looked at the Portals array on the large plinth and she could see a blueish glow emanating from around the Obsidian crystals on the array. She glanced back and watched carefully as Doctor Kamen activated the portal then the crackling sound grew into loud ripping noise and in a flash the area between the two C shaped arcs of the array filled with a blue rippling pool of light. The hypnotic pool of Light the was the portals gateway and Sofia was in awe of it and she found herself turning and walking almost hypnotically towards the ramp.

Stephen glanced around and could see everyone’s eyes were on the Portals gateway and he called to Sofia,” Isn’t it wonderful?”

Sofia turned to Stephen and sensed what was coming next and slide her right hand to her trouser pocket and grasped her Pen.

“It is amazing,” she agreed.

Stephen nodded ,” However I think we have seen enough…”

Sofia realised this was the agreed signal and slowly stepped backwards away from everyone and closer to the ramp and then she began to cough. As Uttick looked to Sofia and her coughing fit Stephen silently and smoothly pulled his pen out and swivelled its top 90 degrees and quickly pointed and fired two kill shots at the sitting behemoth Taurus. He was watching Sofia and didn’t realise anything as the first bolt of energy hit him in the head which shot back instantly and with a crack crunched against the wall. The second energy bolt hit him in the chest and knocked him off the chair where he collapsed on the floor however Stephen had instantly spun and Fired at Doctor Kamen who was nearest to him.

Kamen had barely realised what was happening and as he had turned to see Stephen again fired two shots the first hitting him in the side of his head as he turned and the second hitting him in the chest knocking him back.

Sofia when she saw Stephen make his move had armed and brought her pen up in one flowing movement and fired two shots at Uttick who had a look off shock on his face as the first energy bolt hit him in the chest pushing him back. He let out a angry roar then the second energy bolt hit him again in the chest and he staggered and fell backwards against the large Analyser machine and then slide to the ground where he lay motionless. Sofia turned to see Bryce roar with anger then start to run towards her but before he could move Stephen shot him down again with a kill shot to the side of his head and even as he fell he was hit by a shot from Sofia and another from Stephen. He collapsed against the ramp and rolled onto the ground quite dead.

Stephen quickly stepped forward and dragged Doctor Kamens body by the ankles away from the controls and quickly dumped him by Uttick then he returned did the same with Bryce. Sofia returned to the controls and surveyed the settings. Stephen Immediately went to the large steel doors that were the entrance to the research lab and began to fuse them together.

Sofia closed the Portals test programme and immediately began to bring more of the boosters on line and monitored as the power began to steadily increase …..Stephen when finished with the two steel entrance doors fusing them shut went to each of the fire doors on either side of the lab and welded them shut also and fusing their hinges then dragged a workbench across them to block them also. As Stephen did this he could hear the humming noise slowly but steadily grow as Sofia brought more and more of the boosters online and then gradually wound their power out puts up to the maximum.

“ How goes it Sofia?” he called.

“ Slightly different than the simulator…s so I have to be careful Stephen ,” replied Sofia.

“ Your right to be careful honey,” agreed Stephen as he went to the two even larger Steel doors at the rear of the Laboratory. Stephen had total trust in Sofia’s judgement and he quickly began to weld these two huge doors together.

When he did that he pushed various benches out of the way to clear a larger area in front of the ramp to the plinth and the Portal. Then he heard a loud buzzing noise an saw a light flashing on the wall by an intercom and looked to Sofia who had also noted it.

“ Company ?” she surmised.

Stephen nodded and Sofia smiled ,” You fused all the doors shut at the right time then.”

Just then they heard a banging sound on the Two entrance doors.

“ They really don’t want to join this party,” chuckled Stephen.

“ Brannion what can you see and hear ?” asked Sofia.

“ The first alarm has been raised and they are calling in the reinforcements and a special assault team,” came the Steady reply.” The guards there have been told to check all the doors but are commanded not try and intervene…. I will monitor them and give you warning.”

“Stuart have you still got a lock on us?” asked Stephen

“ Yes no worries thanks to the comms rings…”

“ Is Toreq ready to transport down?” asked Stephen.

“Yes he is on the transport pads with two torpedoes in their launchers.”

“ Ok I am in the center of the clear area in front of the ramp. Lock on this spot then let me step away and you can transport Toreq down,” advised Stephen.

“ Ok I am locked down ,” confirmed Stuart.” You can step back I will energise in five ..four ..three … two …one..”

Stephen stepped back and watched as the area began to shimmer and the familiar melodic tone was heard, then the dark opaque forms appeared and took shape and appeared as Toreq and on one side two round containers about 6 ft long with rounded ends each on a trolley designed obviously for them.

“All is well?” enquired Toreq calmly.

“ The place is sealed up,” replied Stephen.” Though the alarm has been sounded.”

Toreq nodded and walked over to Sofia who was carefully and methodically putting more of the boosters on line.

“ Did it go well with you Sofia?”

“ As we planned and agreed Toreq ,” she said barely glancing at him.

Toreq returned and with Stephens help he turned the containers around to face the array side by side he then activated a button and a laser light illuminated where each torpedo would target. He pressed a button that elevated each of the tubes and moved them until they were aimed dead centre of the array. When satisfied he pressed another button and with a clunk they were locked in position and to the floor. He had a shoulder satchel on and he took out a small device and activated it then checked everything was fine.

“ We are good to go,” he stated. He then walked over to the one of the many booster packs or SCPs as Stuart had named them and took another component out and placed it on top of the Booster pack.” This will generate a instant an defective electromagnetic charge and….”   
 “ Reverse the Polarity,” chimed in Sofia laughing.” You boys and your Doctor who.”

“Quite,” murmured Toreq who produced another small device.” This is the transmitterthat will activate it just press the green button and in 10 seconds it will initiate it.”

“ How long after that before it goes Boom?” asked Sofia.

“ Only a few seconds ,” replied Toreq.

“ It s just we are building up power here to 25 trillion Watts that could take out the planet Toreq,” Said Sofia in a slightly worried Tone.

“ Which is why we must do it with the Portal open so the blast energy will be sucked into the Portal and not be released here on the Earth. So we must set it off after the torpedoes have been launched but before they reach their target. When they reach their target and explode the portal will shut automatically…so timing is vital.”

Sofia then moved down to another console,” I am going to find and bring up the Valhalla rift coordinates now guys.”

“ Ok reinforcements are arriving in various hover carriers and they are carrying lots of equipment,” Brannion.” I will monitor them and let you know if they look dangerous. I can hopefully take them all out within a half mile radius using their own comm system.”

“ Keep us posted then ,” advised Stephen who then watched Sofia who was using the controls like a true professional .

“ Monitor the Total power out put for me and say if its steady,” she asked Toreq.” It must not fluctuate more then 5% or we cannot generate the tachyon pulse.”

Toreq moved to the Power displays ,” We are just under 26 trillion Watts and its steady….”

Stephen kept looking around slowly but constantly at the doors checking for any danger signs and then inevitably his gaze was drawn back to the bodies of the three Melkorne that had led this dangerous threat. Looking quite broken and un godlike now..

“ Ok I have accessed the coordinates to the Valhalla rift,” announced Sofia triumphantly. “I will enter them to the Portal now.”

“ The Power is rock steady, “ confirmed Toreq.

Sofia hands danced across the controls ,” It accepts them…”

She then moved to the last Console and as she had practiced several times on the simulator and had watched Doctor Kamen earlier she activated the portal. They all instinctively turned to the portal as the crackling noise sounded again and the blueish glow began to emanate from the crystals on the Portal array. Sofia scanned all the indications then turned to Toreq.

“ The boosters are fully charged and the system is totally independent ,” she said.” You can shut down the feed from the Fusion reactor and isolate it .”

Toreq went to the first console furthest away from the Portal and quickly shut it down and then they heard the crackling noise grew into what almost sounded like a lightning strike. The blue glowing lights grew and then with a crack the blue shimmering pool of light filled the area between the two C shaped transmitters of the Array.

“ The Link is established and is Stable, “ said Sofia with a sense of relief.

Stephen triumphantly punched the air and quickly stepped over and warmly hugged Sofia.

“ I said you could do it!,” he exclaimed and kissed Sofia.” I am so proud of you so would your boys be. Your mother and Galina your old teacher and friend would be too…. They led you here Honey and you’re a hero.”

“ You led me here too… Stephen ,” she said smiling and wiped away a tear then hugged and kissed Stephen back.

“ I am very Proud of you too,” added Toreq.” You have been wonderful Sofia.”

“ I can read a huge increase in Nuetrino radiation and Tachion emissions,” announced Brannion in a matter of fact manner over the comms rings.

Toreq could see the concern on both Stephen and Sofia’s faces and held a hand up,” It is harmless to us and will not affect the transporters it only effects the ships ability to accurately scan inside this laboratory.”

“ I can detect a drop of air pressure though,” noted Brannion.

Stephen walked towards the array and held up a hand and could feel it pulled slightly towards the portal.

“ Wow, I can feel the suction pulling me to the Portal,” he said.

Sofia turned to the control panel and tore a page from a notebook that was on it. She scrunched it up then stepped towards the ramp beside Stephen and threw it into the air above the ramp. The paper flew across the ramp but then paused mid air half way across and changing course flying into the portal and disappearing into the shimmering pool of Blue light that was the entrance to the gateway.

“ That explains that ,” she concluded.

“Impressive honey,” agreed Stephen.

They both looked at the impressive and almost hypnotic sight and could feel the pull towards the Portal.

“ I saw it in the simulator but this is amazing,” said Sofia in wonder.

“ A bit scary,” murmured Stephen.

Toreq had produced his hand held scanner and was waving it towards the Portal and checking its readings.

“ Fascinating, “ he stated softly.

“ That’s typical Vulcan understatement,” chuckled Stephen who looked at Sofia and smiled Broadly when she nodded in agreement.

“The portal will remain open for just over 14 minutes now so we must launch the torpedoes quickly as they will take around 8 minutes to reach their target and will explode within a microsecond of sensing their exit.” Said Toreq.” After four minutes of their flight we can then destroy the CTP at this end and the portals tunnel will collapse as a ripple from this end allowing the torpedoes too reach their target.”

“ We can be sure of that?” asked Stephen.

“That’s what the Melkornes own instructions told us,” replied Toreq.” Thanks to Sofia we have a full technical breakdown of the operation of the whole Cosmic Time Portal or CTP as Stuart named it.”

He the waved Stephen and Sofia back away from the ramp and they all stood by the Power supply Console the furthest from the ramp. Toreq then reached into his bag and held up a small hand held transmitter which he pointed towards the Two Quantum Torpedos in their launch containers,

“Am firing now ,” he said then pressed the activation button.

There was then a loud pop pop and a wooshing noise as the two Torpedoes popped out of their containers and flew within a microsecond of each other and into the center Blue shimmering pool of the Portal and disappeared.

“ Mission accomplished,” sighed Stephen who looked to Sofia and Toreq happily.

“ Can we not just set the timer for four minutes on your Reverse Polarity Device and Transport out now?” asked Sofia.

“ The unity teams might break in that time and might disarm our device,” suggested Toreq.

“ Speaking of which More teams have arrived ,” announced Brannion.” and they are carrying in what is probably wall breaching equipment in three groups to break into your Lab. I am going to initiate a pulse through their own comms system which should take out all their personnel for up to half a kilometre from you.”

“ Ok do it,” urged Sofia who looked to Stephen and Toreq who both agreed.

“ Will activate in three… two…one..” stated Brannion…..After a few seconds Brannion then informed them.” It seems to have worked our scanners and the cameras show they all collapsed within seconds… Luckily they all wear the same earpieces to communicate.”

“ It only need delay them for another 3 minutes ,” judged Sofia confidently.

Stephen could now see though Toreq was playing with his hand held Transmitter and not looking at all happy, they watched as he seemed to be examining it.

“ The timer is not working,” said Toreq who sounded unhappy.

“ Turn it on and off again,” suggested Stephen,” I do that all the time.”

“ I tried that twice ,” Replied the Vulcan. Showing Stephen the transmitter.” It will still activate our Reverse polarity device but instantly…”

“ You said it will take a few seconds to take effect,” said Sofia. “ So we can activate it and beam us out instantly surely.”

“ You can do that Stuart? Can’t you?” asked Stephen.

“ Instantly,” confirmed Stuart from the Timeship over the comms channel. ”My fingers are hovering on the buttons that are set on your comms rings I have got it,”

Stephen breathed a sigh of relief and looked at Toreq who silently nodded.

“ A new Plan then,” mused Sofia confidently.” This will be Plan D.”

Stephen chuckled at Sofia’s joke about his always having a back up plan ready to go and he reached over and warmly squeezed her shoulder. Toreq put the faulty transmitter down on the Power supply Console.

” You two could transport up now ,” he stated to them.” I can wait a few minutes then activate the device. There is no need for us all to be at risk.”

“ Ok the stunning seems to be wearing off now and the unity forces seem to be recovering,” announced Brannion. “ However they seem in total dis array stumbling around and their comms system is down.”

“ I think we will wait,” cautioned Stephen.

“It is just over a minute we have to wait,” said Sofia. ”We can hang on together Toreq.”

“ All for one,” announced Stuart over the comms system which caused them all even the young Vulcan to smile and chuckle.

Stephen was standing behind Sofia and Toreq and happily patted his comrades on their shoulders, and then he glanced to his left as a sudden movement caught his eyes. To his shock and utter amazement he could see Malachi Uttick was slowly getting to his feet and appeared to be holding a phaser like blaster in his hand. Stephen realised he was raising the blaster to fire at them and so he pushed Sofia and Toreq forcibly clear and grabbed his own weapon from his pocket. Thanks to Stephen pushing Toreq and Sofia away, Utticks shot missed them but hit the power Supply Console that had been turned off but it still partly exploded sending sparks and debris in the air.

Stephen fired now at Uttick a kill shot to the head which hit the angry Melkorne leader in the face but even as he did Uttick had fired again. Then as Uttick collapsed Lifeless back down to the floor his shot hit Stephen on the left shoulder and sent him spinning backwards and around and falling onto the shattered Power supply console. Stephen felt woozy, he could smell burning and his his injured left shoulder throbbed but when he tried to push himself up with his right hand arm he felt a terrible stab of pain in his stomach He instantly fell back and grabbed at his stomach with his good hand and felt something wrong . Looking down he could see he was impaled though his back and a jagged piece of metal was poking out from his stomach.

Sofia saw what had happened and leapt to Stephens aide She held his head in her hands and crying openly she urged him to hang on.

“ Please baby you must hang on! I cannot! I will not Loose you! I love you Stephen! I am sorry I only Stunned Uttick I couldn’t kill him I am sorry! Please hang in there…. I love you!”

“ It’s ok, “ responded Stephen who then coughed up some blood . “ I fell for a teacher not a killer Sofia..”

Sofia kissed him,” It will be ok Stephen…Please hang on.”

“ What happened ,” asked Brannion over the comms with an air of concern. “We detected energy weapon fire? And the unity assault teams are now moving to breach the walls. They have dumped their comms gear and could be ready to force an entry in seconds.”

Toreq was holding his scanner and carefully canning over Stephens injuries and his dark look betrayed his findings.

“ I am having a bad day,” chuckled Stephen who then proceeded to cough up more blood.

“ Hang in there Baby,” said Sofia cradling his head and kissing him.” We will get out of this…my Brave Belfast Boy.”

“ I am sorry,” stated Toreq.”You have massive internal injuries and are bleeding out, we cannot transport you in this configuration and there is no time… In a minute or so you will loose consciousness Stephen. Even in the 31st century I doubt a starship doctor could…”

“ NO!” yelled Sofia.” I will not leave you! I love you!”

As Sofia’s tears ran down and dripped on him he reached up with his good right hand and patted Sofia then gently held his hand out to Toreq.

“ Give me the bloody transmitter and you two get out of here! Said Stephen.” Toreq just let me finish this?! “

Sofia wept openly as Toreq gave Stephen the transmitter and he looked at her,.

“ Plan E then.. “ Stephen tried to joke but then grimaced with pain. “ Needs of the many and you gotta go Sofia.. I love you baby.. I always told you to trust me … that I would look after you… I love you Sofia Nerovyna.”

He then nodded to her as Toreq gently lifted her away..

“I love you Stephen….” Sofia Sobbed .

“ Stuart Beam Sofia and Toreq up Now!”

Then he watched as then Toreq and Sofia dis appeared in a opaque shimmering light and sighed,” Don’t know what your gonna tell my lot Stuart but let my kids know I love them..Are they safe aboard? “

“ just materialising now we wil timeslip………”

Must have done their time slip thought Stephen who felt another wave of pain and nausea almost overwhelm him. Then he quickly thought of his family and the adventure he had just had and knew he had to do this to save them and Sofia the lady he loved.

As he coughed up more blood he gently pressed the Button Toreq had shown him and closed his eyes and he felt strangely resolved.. then after perhaps a second or two he opened his eyes and wondered when it would…….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

When Sofia and Toreq materialised Stuart stepped forward and Sofia sobbing badly threw her arms around Stuart and hugged him. Then after nearly a minute she backed away and tried to slowly collect her composure.

“ He died Saving us Stuart,” she sobbed . “ He pushed us to safety out of the way… He gave his life Stuart to save us.”

“I was in front of you,” stated Toreq sadly.” I would have been hit by that first shot.”   
 “ He saved us all, “ sobbed Sofia almost uncontrollably. “ He didn’t have to…. I stunned Uttick.. I couldn’t kill him. I should have…. but I couldn’t”   
 “ I heard Sofia,” said Stuart softly. “ Stephen understood too. We all thought the stun shots would knock them out for a day……. He died saying he loved you… It was Uttick the Melkorne that killed him and Stephen finished them Sofia… Stephen won.”

“And I had asked you to not kill them but to stun them,” stated Toreq sadly . “ So not only did he get shot pushing me to safety. It was my decision in asking you to stun Uttick led us to this terrible outcome.”

Just then the door slid open and Brannion walked in looking suitably sombre.

” What has happened ,” asked Toreq.

“ We time slipped 24 hours into the future and to a different position a but I launched a probe prior to that and I have since uploaded its findings.”

“ What happened?” asked Stuart softly.

Brannion looked at them all. “ Fourteen seconds after you transported out the transmitter was activated by Stephen after a further three seconds a huge explosion was detected and every atom and particle inside that Lab was decimated. Luckily the Portal was open and it swallowed everything up, both the debris and the energy. The outer shell of the building held long enough for the unity corporation personnel to flee but soon after it imploded and there is now just smouldering crater. The local news stated Malachi Uttick and some of his key personnel died during an experiment testing a new energy scource and they died as heroes. The Unity corporation says the Fusion power station was not a part of this experiment and they will now share their Fusion designs with the world.

Stephen gave his life to save us, to save his world and the Peoples of the Federation…The Melkorne threat is now over and Stephen Mccloughlin was a hero and a friend so ...we must honour his memory…”

“ Can’t we go back and save him?” asked Sofia.” This is a tmeship.”

“ We cannot go back and cross our own timeline,” replied Brannion.” If we even tried the mission might fail and Stephen would then have died for nothing.

“Where do we go now then?” asked Stuart sadly.

“ We will return you home soon but first we must travel to the Federation Headquarters in San Francisco and report in to the Temporal Agency,” replied Brannion.” Close to where we are now but in the 31st Century.”

“ Stephen would have loved that,” said Stuart.

“ Oh my poor Brave Belfast Boy,” said Sofia softly.

Brannion took Sofia’s hand,” We shall never forget him but for now shall we go and I can show you the future he saved for us all Sofia ?”

Sofia nodded and Brannion led them all out of the transporter room and the doors slowly closed behind them…

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

“ But I shall hear though soft you tread above me..

And all my grave shall warmer, sweeter be

And you will bend and tell me that you love me

And I shall sleep in in peace until you come to me…….

O Danny Boy…. 1913