



Starbase 118 Writing Challenge  
September & October 2013  
"What Will Come"

For this Challenge, Will -- the writer behind Lieutenant Ben Livingston and the winner of the July & August "Under My Skin" Challenge -- would like you to consider the topic "What Will Come." The Challenge dares you to consider the implications of action -- or perhaps of inaction -- upon the future, if you prefer, but remember that in *Trek*, what will come is not necessarily always in the future. Certainly, with the developments in 118 fleet in the past year or so, including the Small War with the Klingons in last year's blockbusters, the resurfacing of the Iconian gateways in this year's, and the recent addition of slipstream travel to many ships in the fleet, "what will come" has never been muddier. However, that's up to you to determine, and the judges look forward to receiving your entries!

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*The first story in this collection, "Yesterday's Tomorrow," was selected by the judges as the winner for this round. Its author, Chris, writer for Lieutenant Sinda Essen and formerly Commander Jhen Thelev, counts this as his sixth Challenge victory, a first for the group. His first win was the September & October round six years ago, in 2007, and followed it up with a second win just three rounds later. Those stories, like this winner, make extensive use of dialogue and quick character establishment to craft a narrative that cracks along whip-fast until they deliver you, breathless, at the final word.*

## Yesterday's Tomorrow

(Sinda Essen)

*"Our people have never had it so good." Harold Macmillan, 1957*

Charles Warrington couldn't help but smile as he opened the curtains and gazed upon the new day. A bright yellow summer sun was already shining in the clear blue sky making the River Thames positively sparkle.

Only a decade on from the end of the war and London was rebuilt bigger, brighter and more beautiful than she had ever been before the blitz. Charles smiled again, relishing his not-insignificant part in that restoration.

But there would be time for such happy thoughts later - right now Charles had to prepare for a busy day.

The offices of the Federated Industries Company loomed over their surroundings. The rapid growth of the building over the last seven years or so echoing the fortunes of the company itself. The post-war years had seen a massive appetite for new products and new technology and FICo had been the ones to provide both. And now their designs were everywhere. Quite literally.

Charles smoothed the creases from his all-in-one pinstripe UniFit as he stepped out of the tube station and gazed up at the building. A quick check of the time on his PIDD showed he was running exactly ten minutes early. Perfect. Today was a big day, a board meeting to discuss the development of their latest invention, one which Charles was especially proud of. It was no exaggeration to say that FICo had already changed the world, but this was the big one. After this, things would never be the same again.

\* \* \*

"This, gentlemen, this is the big one!"

Charles took the opportunity to share a smile with the assembled board members.

"It gives me great pleasure to present to you..." he paused for effect. "The InstaReplimaker!"

He gestured to his assistant and she unveiled the poster with a practiced flourish. The image of a large, bulky, complicated piece of machinery sat in the centre, surrounded by smiling families as a queue of happy people lined up to receive items from a hatch in its side - a toy plane, a new pipe, a steaming casserole.

The board members sat around the table applauded appreciatively as Charles gave a slight bow and beamed.

“Well I must say the chaps in advertising have done a sterling job once again.” This was Masterson, from accounting, a reliable old stooge. “And I for one am very keen to know exactly what it does.”

“Of course, Mr Masterson. Simply put, the InstaReplimaker is capable of producing anything you wish for, instantly!” Charles held up his hands to bring quiet to the sudden eruption of excited voices. “Now, I know that sounds far-fetched, but didn’t people say the same about the Teleconferencer? Or the Translator-tron? And look at them now! Haven’t we always excelled at providing tomorrow’s technology today?”

Sir Bainbridge was the next to speak up, of course. The head of the company had been knighted three years ago after the success of the Translator-tron in re-establishing the League of Nations.

“Alright, Warrington, you’ve certainly got our attention. Now, this device, does it just create things out of thin air?”

“No Sir, that would indeed be a little far-fetched. No, the InstaReplimaker simply transforms matter, any matter really, into new shapes. But the possibilities are quite dazzling. Imagine if the toy stores have run out of the one present little Billy truly wants for Christmas, why simply replimake your own! Or perhaps you have unexpected house guests for Sunday lunch and your wife doesn’t have time to pick up another roast, then why not replimake some extra dinner?”

“Really? This thing can make food, too?” Chapman, head of HR.

“Oh yes,” Charles nodded. “I myself had a cup of tea from the prototype this morning. What’s more, as it transforms matter, it will also revolutionize the waste disposal industry. No more landfills, just put your rubbish into the InstaReplimaker and turn it into something useful instead.”

“Well, that is quite remarkable.” Chapman frowned. “Hold on, though, if this machine can do all these things won’t that put people out of work? Farmers, shopkeepers, factory workers. My word! Won’t this change the whole economy?”

“I imagine so, Mr Chapman. And Federated Industries will be at the forefront of those changes. But I’ll leave such matters to you, gentlemen. Rather out of my league, I fear.”

Sir Bainbridge cleared his throat. “How soon will your boys be able to produce these, Warrington?”

“Some time yet, Sir. We’re having difficulty with the size and the power source. It uses quite a phenomenal amount of energy. I’ll be speaking to Dr Hope this afternoon. But we hope to have some factory models ready by the end of the year.”

“Very good. I’ll be expecting regular updates. Thank you, Warrington, you may go. Masterson, do you have the growth figures for the second quarter?”

Charles was still smiling happily as he watched his assistant gather together the presentation items.

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The scientific research centre formed the central core of FICo’s building. Charles wound his way up the stairs to the top floor development laboratory, or the ideas room as they liked to call it, pausing to exchange brief pleasantries with the security guards along the way. The room was the usual quiet hum of activity, lit as always by the bright white glow emanating from behind the partition at the far end. Dr Hope himself was already there, flicking through something on a clipboard, and gave a warm smile when Charles entered.

“Ah, Charles! Tell me, how was the meeting? Did the board like the design?”

“How could they not, Doctor?” Charles replied. “Sir Bainbridge is keen to be kept informed. Have you made any progress on the power problem at all?”

“Not so far.” Hope shook his head. “It’s causing some problems, but now we have the prototype running I have a few ideas for items which might help.”

“You never cease to amaze me, Doctor.” Charles marvelled. “You have such a knack for getting these things to work. Speaking of which, have we received anything new today?”

The pair of them turned to look down the room towards the light. Dr Hope drew a large collection of keys from his pocket and started forward.

“Let’s see, shall we?”

It took some time to navigate the locks before they opened the door and stepped behind the partition. The light here was almost blinding, pouring from the object which floated in mid-air in front of them. It always made Charles uncomfortable to look at it directly, it was like a large funnel much wider at one end and shrinking to a point at the other. It undulated slowly, constantly moving, a waterspout of pure energy disappearing eternally down a giant plug hole, although there was certainly no plug to be seen or any indication of what might be on the other side of the portal.

But items would appear out of it from time to time, items of such fantastic technology they had the power to change the world. FICo’s main job was trying to adapt that technology for public consumption.

“Nothing new yet, Charles. Although I must admit I’m rather glad. I have enough on my plate as it is!”

Charles merely nodded absently. Nobody asked where the objects came from anymore, that simply wasn’t the done thing, and speculation tended to make Dr Hope rather upset. But everyone wondered, of course. Charles had formed his own opinion some time ago but for some reason today, staring into the portal, he felt particularly ill at ease, his previously cheery disposition seeming to evaporate in the white light.

“Doctor, do you ever wonder if there’s someone on the other side there deliberately sending us these things, or is it merely chance?”

“Not only do I not wonder, Charles, neither do I care.” He gestured towards the glowing portal. “I cannot begin to explain the science behind this thing, but I hardly think there is a person at the other end popping these things in! No, it is merely some sort of cosmic chance and a very fortuitous one at that.”

He fixed Charles with a penetrating look.

“I regard it as a gift, and so should you, Charles. If we didn’t make use of it I’m sure somebody else would have done. And it’s unlike you to be questioning this providence, is there something on your mind?”

“I’m sorry, perhaps it’s just the excitement of the new Replimaker. It just started me thinking of what the future holds. For the company, I mean.” He hurriedly added.

“Of course, dear boy, of course.”

Hope placed a friendly arm around Charles’s shoulder and guided him back towards the door.

“We’re all interested in the company’s fortunes, of course. But don’t you worry, I’ll sort out this power problem in no time, you’ll see, and we’ll soon get back to our good work.”

“In no time... Yes, yes of course Doctor Hope. Thank you for your time, I’ll be sure to let Sir Bainbridge know how you’re getting on.”

Charles glanced over his shoulder at the portal once more before Dr Hope pulled the door closed with a resounding clang. He seemed eager for Charles to be leaving and Charles, for his part, was eager to distance himself from that thing. Something had felt different about it today and Charles couldn’t shake the feeling that perhaps there was some significance in that, as if he was missing something important.

Shaking his head he put the thought to the back of his mind and hurried down the stairs. He still had plenty of work to be done to prepare the world for the InstaReplimaker, after all.

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Charles’s smile had been replaced by a thoughtful frown that evening as he made his way home, the train travelling to the very outskirts of the city. The station tended to be deserted at this hour, but tonight there was someone stood on the platform, waiting. As Charles stepped off the train the figure spoke.

“Mr Warrington?”

“Yes?” Charles frowned. The figure was a woman, quite short and with a peculiar accent. As the train pulled away the carriage lights flashed across her revealing the UniFit she was wearing. Charles noted the design; black with teal-coloured shoulders and three curious brass buttons on the collar. Some cheap version from overseas he surmised, only made more obvious by the triangular knock-off Translator-tron broach pinned to the front of her clothing.

“Do I know you, miss?”

“No yet, but I do know you and I know what you’ll do.”

“What I’ll do?” Charles asked, confused. “I’m sorry but I have no intentions other than getting home, having a cup of tea and running a hot bath.”

“I’m not talking about tonight, Mr Warrington. I’m talking about the future.” She took a step closer, the light falling across her short blond hair. “My name is Charlotte Carr and I’m from a planet in the Alpha Centauri system.”

“An alien?” Charles scoffed “I trust you are not being serious!”

“No, not an alien, I’m as human as you. I’m a time traveller.” The woman narrowed her eyes as Charles hesitated. “You find that easier to believe, don’t you, Mr Warrington? Because you know such a thing is possible.”

Charles somehow found his voice again.

“I’m afraid I don’t know what you’re talking about.” His tone was curt. “Now I really must bid you good night, miss.”

“I know about the replimaker.” She smiled slightly as Charles stopped in his tracks. “Although where I come from we call it a replicator. Semantics, I suppose, it still does the same thing, turning one form of matter into another.”

“How did you find out about that?” Charles tried to make his voice angry to hide his fear.

“I told you, I’m a time traveller. Replicators have been common place since the twenty-third century but that’s the reason why I’m here, really. They don’t belong in the middle of the twentieth century. You’ve been cheating, Mr Warrington, you and Sir Bainbridge and all the people at your Federated Industries.”

Guilt crept over Charles’s face as he chewed his lip. He’d seen so many wonders since the end of the world war, things he would never have even dreamed possible, so a strange woman claiming to be from the future seemed far from incredible.

“Very well, I suppose there can’t be denying things from someone who knows my future. But why are you here?”

“You’re not ready for this technology yet, you’ve not earned it.” She paused a moment before continuing. “Maybe it’s not all about the money. Maybe you have lofty goals. After all, ridding the world of hunger and drought is a pretty big thing. But it doesn’t work like that, the world

needs to be prepared first otherwise there will be consequences that you cannot even begin to fathom.”

“But why now? If you’re from the future I assume you could have picked any time to return. Why not when we invented the Universal Outfit? Or the Personal Information Data Device? Or the Translator-tron? They were pretty disruptive, weren’t they? Changing the way we communicate with each other.”

“Oh yes,” Charlotte agreed. “But your replimaker will be the one that really tips the scales. What happens when everyone suddenly has everything they ever wanted, without restraint? Well, give it a few years and you’ll find out. You never developed these things so you don’t understand their dangers, you just want to put them out there and make a sale while claiming that you’re ‘doing good’. That makes you very naïve or very greedy, or both. But actually it’s not the technology which brought me here, now. It’s you.”

“Me? What difference do I make?”

“All the difference in the world, Mr Warrington. This is the exact day you started having doubts, isn’t it? Questioning the source of all these technological marvels?”

“How could you possibly know that?!” Charles blanched. “Oh Lord, are you some sort of physic mind reader?”

“Not quite.” Charlotte smiled slightly. “I’ve just read your biography.”

“Ah, really? I write a book? Well now that is…”

“Never mind.” Charlotte cut him off. “I’m here because your actions are changing the future. Your future that is, my past. And the changes are not for the better, believe me. You say you want to change the world? Well, believe me, you succeed on that front. You’re an educated man, Mr Warrington, I’m sure you don’t need me to tell you that every action has a reaction.”

“I see. But what about the things we have already invented?”

“For starters, you didn’t invent them, you stole them. Secondly, if all goes to plan they won’t matter. If you reverse the damage then time will heal itself and you’ll have never got your hands on those things in the first place.”

“But we’ve already sold millions of them. How can…”



Charlotte held up a hand to stop him. “Just trust me on this. Temporal affairs tend to be very complicated and it’ll only give you a headache.”

Charles sighed and nodded.

“Alright, let us say I believe you. What can I do to put it right?”

“In your offices there’s a portal, right? The source of all this technology? What you have there is an artificial wormhole. It was created in the future by someone who wanted to interfere with your recent war. Maybe that worked, maybe it didn’t, but now it’s being used for this personal gain and causing a lot of damage.”

“I’ve seen it, today in fact.” Charles said. “Dr Hope is...”

Charlotte interrupted. “Dr Hope? Is that what he’s calling himself now? That has a certain irony, I suppose.”

“You.. you know him?” Charles was bewildered, just when he thought he was getting to grips with the conversation.

“You could say we’re old friends. I’ve known your doctor for longer than you’ve been alive.” She paused. “Longer than I’ve been alive, too, come to think of it. But that’s not your problem, I need you to deal with the wormhole. Simply closing it won’t undo the problem, we need to get creative, prevent it from ever having existed in the first place. Luckily, that sort of thing isn’t so hard when you’re already dealing with fractured time.”

“And how, exactly, am I supposed to do that?” Charles folded his arms. “I’m no scientist, let alone a time traveller. Why don’t you do it?”

“Because you can get into the building, tonight, and I’ll guide you through it. Don’t worry about Dr Hope, I’ll take care of that.”

“What?” Charles forced a laugh, trying to inject some humour into a world which seemed to be rapidly going mad. “I suppose you’re going to shoot him with your ray gun?”

“Yes.” Charlotte gave him a flat look.

“Oh.”

“Now come along, Mr Warrington, we have a lot to do and only all the time in the world in which to do it.”

Charlotte turned smartly on her heel and vanished into the dark street beyond the platform. Charles hesitated, considering the implications of everything she'd said. After a moment he straightened his back and smoothed the creases out of his Universal Outfit once again before striding resolutely after her.

Diplomatic Impunity  
or The Tribble with Troubles  
(Saveron)

The battered, over-full leather satchel hit the floor with a thud as the door slid shut behind him and Ramsey heaved a great sigh of relief at finally coming home. The problem with being Professor Ramsey Bakewell, Xenosociologist extraordinaire – he mused as he kicked his shoes off and shuffled into a pair of well-worn slippers – was that he was always being asked to speak, mediate, advise and intervene at all manner of conferences, peace talks, negotiations and so on. Which was all very flattering and of course the opportunity to assist in preventing inter-stellar war and such like was never something he was going to refuse, but it took up so much blasted time.

The lights activating as he moved through the apartment, Ramsey headed over to the replicator for a mug of coffee to help him think. He had a new nutrient formulation to try that might just be the answer to the particular problem that he'd pondered for so long, turning it over in his mind on the trip back rather than worrying about whether the Bajoran Kai found his tie with the dancing Orionese slave girl on it to be in poor taste. There were far more important things in life, and this little problem was one of them.

If a Tellarite diplomat offended the Arkonian Ambassador, it was probably because the Ambassador was looking to be offended, not because Tellarites were particularly argumentative. One of the reasons that he went to conferences such as this most recent one was to get that particular point across to the Federation's diplomats. It was one thing to be the Ambassador to a particular species, to learn their culture and fit in almost like a native, but it wasn't practical for members of the Federation as a whole, across hundreds of species and thousands of cultures, to learn them all. What was practical was to take a pragmatic view to inter-species relations, which was where his three Golden Rules had come from.

Pulling a micro-PADD from his pocket, he checked the hastily scribbled formulation that had been vouchsafed to him by the Andorian Ambassador's sub-Secretary, and cross-checked it with his own fastidious notes on his personal computer. He absently set the mug down upon a haphazard stack of e-books, the top volume being the latest Mills and Boon. It made interesting reading; the culture of his own species was weird enough, never mind anyone else's.

'Be polite, be well behaved, be prepared to give the benefit of the doubt.' That was how they taught his Rules in Federation Schools, and in Starfleet. That was of course the sanitised

version, approved as being politically correct by the establishment, which just showed that they had missed the point entirely. Apparently 'don't be rude, don't be a [...], don't go looking for trouble' had not been found acceptable. But that was the core of the issue; if someone wanted to be offended, they would find a way. If someone really wanted to start a war, they would find a way to do that too. And if you had to walk on egg shells around others the whole time then eventually something was going to go 'crunch'. No, the way forward was to establish a robust and tolerant relationship, where you didn't get upset with someone over using their fingers to eat their dinner, just because your people didn't. Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations as the Vulcans liked to say. Splendid people, if they'd only develop a sense of humour.

Sighing, Ramsey took a meditative swig of his coffee and regarded the now modified formulation. Would it have the desired effect? The problem was, there really was only one way to find out. Just as, when you sat down to the negotiating table with no real knowledge of the intentions of one's alien companions, one simply had to make one's best effort, one's best guess and be prepared to stand by one's convictions; what ultimately came of it was beyond one's control. So, in the end, was this. Once one accepted that one was a mote in the universe's eye, everyone had their own agenda and Murphy was a prat, it was much easier to take a relaxed attitude to existence. One focused on the differences that one could make, and didn't sweat the big stuff. And wore loud ties because one could.

The small stuff now, that was where one could make a difference. Forgetting his precariously balanced coffee, Bakewell uploaded the new formula to his pocket PADD and shuffled back to the replicator. Feeding the formulation in he keyed the appliance's operation and watched as a dish with two pale brown pellets appears in the machine's output. Would they be the answer that he was seeking? Only time would tell.

Picking up the dish he wandered to one of the back rooms where a faint cooing rose suddenly in volume as the lights went on. Here they were, his pride and joy. Never mind sycophantic diplomats and arrogant Ambassadors, this was where things got serious.

Balls of short fluff, long fluff, spots and stripes milled in cages and sang their brain-melting song. Tribble hybridisers became immune to the effect, or they stopped. Or their brains dribbled out of their ears. Ramsey didn't really hear it any more.

The thing about Tribbles was that, unlike alien species, one had to be very precise when dealing with them. Too much food and they cloned themselves exponentially; too little and they went dormant. But just enough and the right kinds and they would hybridise with each other. The nature of native flora of their homeworld was the subject of great conjecture, as

people like Bakewell studied and theorised and strove to find the right formulation to accelerate their hybridisation efforts. Such formulations were often jealously guarded and carefully traded. His was good, but he hoped this might be better. It might just be the key.

There, in a cage near the back, nestled two tribbles that might just hold the answer. The long sought after Angora White, a long-haired pure white tribble. One was long-haired and predominantly white with a few black spots, the other was medium length and pure in it's lack of colour. The difficulty was combining the traits in the right combination. Highly inter-hybridised, these strains weren't the enthusiastic breeders that their wild-type cousins could be, and this pair wouldn't breed at all. The Angora Pied with the minimum spotting had never bred, and if he could persuade it he might just crack the Angora White for good.

Reaching in, Ramsey dropped one pellet in front of each tribble, watched as each seemed to wake and undulate forward to take its food which disappeared underneath the fur to be consumed. The offering was at least appreciated, as each sang contentedly.

Now was the worst part, of course. Now there was nothing that he could do but wait and see what happened. See whether he might, in a few months time, have something worth taking to the next Combined Tribble Fanciers Association Annual Show.

He supposed he might as well read that treatise from the Cardassian Senate Committee for Federation Relations in the meantime.

## A Place in Time

(Brayden Jorey)

Jorey materialized on the transporter pad to see his childhood friend and imzadi, Koroth, standing at the door to welcome him.

“Welcome aboard the USS Perseverance, Mission Specialist Jorey.”

Jorey said nothing. He knew he didn't have to speak because his surprised expression and uninhibited smile told it better than any words could. Jorey moved slowly toward him. His limbs were nearly numb from the kind of shock that only true joy could cause. He wrapped his arms around the Klingon and kissed his cheek. Jorey felt Koroth's arms around him and the two lingered in a strong and warm embrace. A delighted smirk slowly emerged on Jorey's face as he heard his love unintentionally growl under his breath.

“I almost forgot how good you felt.” the Klingon whispered before pulling away and taking a formal stance and tone. “The Captain is eager to get this test underway. We will have to catch up on our way there.”

“Of course,” Jorey said starting for the door. “Lead the way.”

The two men discussed their recent promotions, shared the details of their recent missions, and how much they missed each other. They reminisced about their more memorable times together and admitted the pain they often felt having been separated from each other. The conversation may have been rushed, but they were each grateful for the opportunity to see each other and hoped they would have more time together after the test.

“Ah, Lieutenant Jorey,” The captain said, offering a warm, Betazoid smile. “welcome aboard the Perseverance. I'm so delighted to have you here.”

“I've always hoped that I would serve a Betazoid Captain someday.” Jorey said honestly making his way to the tall, strikingly beautiful woman in command red. “Commander Koroth has told me that you are eager to get the first test of your new slipstream drive underway.”

“Yes, of course.” The captain said, taking her seat and looking to her right. “This is my first officer Commander Lindt. Our Chief Engineer has just completed the warm up cycle and we are ready to launch.”

Jorey nodded and smiled at the first officer. He looked down at the console on the arm of his chair. He brought up the ship's energy levels, deflector dish readouts, and external sensors to monitor the quantum field.

"Lindt to engineering. Begin routing power through the deflector and initiate the quantum field." The first officer ordered.

The voice of the ship's Chief Engineer confirmed the order and Jorey focused his attention to his console. Everything seemed to look good. Serving on the USS Tiger-A as the Chief Helm Officer, Jorey was very familiar with what good readings for a stable quantum field and subsequent slipstream should look like. However, the external sensors seemed to be picking up something that didn't seem to fit with what he knew. Jorey wanted to signal out the anomaly and tapped the console.

"Report!" The ship shook violently. "Koroth! By the gods, what is going on?" The captain's voice called out as the unprepared bridge crew were flung from their chairs. Jorey quickly picked himself up in the flashing glow of a red alert and got back in his chair.

"It's like we hit a brick wall, sir." Koroth's voice replied in confusion from behind them. "Systems are in and out, but it appears that we've been attacked."

"Ensign, get that viewscreen back up." The first officer ordered.

"Yes, sir!" The young Romulan replied. "We are receiving an incoming transmission... I can give you audio only."

"We are the Borg." The bridge filled with the powerful, eery, and cold sound of the Borg collective. "Your biological and technological distinctiveness is incompatible to our own. Assimilation is no longer an option. You will be exterminated. Resistance is futile."

The bridge fell into silence from shock, terror, and despair. Jorey looked down at his console to try and see what was out there. None of this made any sense. Jorey looked up at the viewscreen hoping the helmsman had it working.

The screen was filled with the familiar star spangled black space. Jorey looked around the ship to find that there was no damage, no attack, no Borg and no quantum field.

“Lindt to engineering. Begin routing power through the deflector and initiate a quantum field.” The first officer ordered... again. However, this time, before the engineer could respond the captain interrupted.

“Engineering, hold that thought.” The captain said leaning in toward Jorey and placing her hand on his should to get his attention. “Lieutenant, is everything okay.”

Jorey thought he was going crazy. He was afraid to answer. The Betazoid captain could sense his apprehension, but pushed herself into his thoughts and assured him that he should speak his mind.

“I just had the strangest... vision.”

Jorey spoke softly, still trying to make sense of what he saw and piece it together. He explained that he was aboard what looked like their ship, but he somehow knew it wasn't. They had initiated the quantum field, but were attacked before they could enter into the slipstream.

“It was the Borg,” Jorey said obviously disturbed by the experience. “But they were not interested in assimilation. They said they were going to exterminate us. Exterminate the Federation.”

“Ensign,” The captain could sense that Jorey believed what he was saying and wasn't going to take any chances. “is there anything on long range sensors?”

The young ensign at the helm turned toward them and shook his head no. The young human woman was speechless and growing frightened.

“In the vision,” Jorey said looking at the young ensign. “you were a young Romulan.”

“Sir,” The voice of the science officer broke the eerie silence. “I think I might have something.”

The crew all made their way to the science station and huddled around the screen. The officer pulled up images and explained that theoretically, under certain conditions, if two quantum fields were opened simultaneously in parallel universes at the same point in time and space a gateway between those two realities could be opened.

“Perhaps the Lieutenant's” the science offer seemed uncomfortable with the word, “... vision, was of such a parallel universe.”



The whole thing seemed so far fetched to him. This all seemed like a lot of speculation, creative physics, and a waste of time on what Jorey was beginning to believe as nothing more than his imagination running wild. The team was continuing to discuss the theory and the possibilities. Jorey took a tricorder from the science station and headed back to his chair. He knew it happened when he tried to tap the console on his chair and thought it prudent to scan it.

Nothing. Jorey was becoming more frustrated. It bothered him that the bridge was wasting it's time on his apparent awakening into insanity. Jorey put his elbow on the armrest and laid his forehead into his open hand. He closed his eyes and took a few calming breaths.

“Lieutenant!” The scream from the captain beside him made him jump. “Are you okay?”

Jorey opened his eyes to see a panel from the ceiling on the floor in front of him. There was blood on the corner. He lifted his head and looked down at his open hand to see it dripping with blood. He looked up at the viewscreen to see it filled with Borg vessels.

“Sir,” The young Romulan helmsman turned to face them. “We are no longer able to maintain the quantum field, however it looks like the Borg have created one.”

“I'm picking up another ship,” Korothe shouted from behind them. “It looks like it's coming through... but,” Korothe paused, confused by what the sensors were telling him. “It looks like it's the Perseverance!”

“How can that be Commander...” The Captain was cut short as her ship took another direct hit.

The tactical station behind them lit up in fury of sparks, flashes and smoke as Korothe was thrown back against the wall before falling to the floor. Jorey moved quickly to his beloved friend to help him back up. However, Jorey stood over him silent. Looking down at what was now just a corpse. His entire right side from his waist up had been completely burned away revealing scorched muscle and blackened bone. Jorey collapsed on the floor beside him and took him into his arms.

“Korothe.” he was able to whisper through his tightening throat and painful uncontrollable sobs.

He grabbed him tighter and pressed his tear stained face into his neck. He heard the sounds of more weapons fire and the low pitched screeching of the ship slowly being torn apart. The captain was frantically ordering for all crew to abandon ship, but Jorey just stayed there with Koroth in his arms. He decided the best place for him to be, the best place for him to die, was in the arms of the person he loved most. Jorey could feel and hear a gentle growling from the man in his arms.

"I almost forgot how good you felt." the Klingon whispered before pulling away and taking a formal stance and tone.

Jorey opened his eyes to find himself standing in the transporter room. No damage. It took him a moment for the fog to clear from his mind.

"The Captain is eager to get this test underway. We will have to catch up on our way there." Koroth said gesturing toward the door.

Jorey had no idea if what he had seen was real. A premonition or a delusion. He wondered if his turbulent time in Starfleet had finally started to affect his mind. However, he decided that either way, it wouldn't hurt to postpone the test. If that gate were to open maybe they would be sent to a parallel universe to die with their counterparts or worse all those Borg ships would enter into their reality.

"You trust me, Imzadi?" Jorey asked sweetly.

"With my life." Koroth said in heartwarming tone, stepping in with concern and purpose.

"No need for Klingon dramatics." Jorey smirked, as he walked past him toward the exit.  
"Imagine! Everyone thinks that Betazoids are over the top!"

## What Was To Come

(Diego Herrera)

The white, ephemeral mist spiralled around your arms like tendrils. Each finger reached out to tug at your loose-fitting, lily robe, living only long enough to make a connection before vanishing from sight. The feeling was as good as you remembered it; this was the place where you always found solace. In this hall, you would wind yourself into the strands of myriad realities and watch as they birthed and died, taking comfort in your own eternity. And then you saw it.

Long ago, your people took great pains to ensure their continued survival. Their tenure of multiple dimensions was assured by the deployment of spheres, each designed to transform local space into an area habitable by your species. When networked, these spheres could alter vast regions, their domain surrounded by a thermobaric cloud that protected it from sight and from incursion. To the explorer's eye, it would appear to be a spatial anomaly. It was intended also as a deterrent, as the area influenced by the spheres was as harmful to monodimensional beings as their space was to you. For aeons it worked; none but the bravest of explorers dared venture within the confines of the cloud. That was until your people became greedy.

Talk of racial supremacy began as a whisper and built into a roar. It was difficult to turn a deaf ear to it as it swept through to permeate every molecule of the essence of your culture. Opinions changed from day to day; at first the idea of a regime based on superiority was opposed but, eventually, more and more began to march to the beat of its power hungry drum. Traditions of science, history, observation and documentation were abandoned as multigalactic conquest became your society's driving force. All fell to the temptation of a realm ruled by the 'sphere builders', as you had come to be known, the beacon of hope for your race's very existence now a symbol of your intent to crush reality itself beneath your heel.

Amongst the mounting insanity, only a few of you remembered the old ways, clinging to them like the vapours from the Chambers of Observation linger on a scryer's robe. You were one of them. It was difficult at first not to bow to the unstoppable tide but, having seen from the cultures whom you had observed that the lust for power resulted only in destruction, your resolve held strong. Your race's progression to be able to manipulate multidimensional space to observe myriad potential timelines had been regarded initially as an educational boon. With some sadness, you realised that the knowledge that had been drawn from it had been squandered. And then, as more and more spheres were built, as more and more territory

was conquered, something pierced the arrogance of your people's veil of assured supremacy. Panic. This time, there was no gradual gathering of momentum. No, hysteria spread like a cancer, fuelling your people's jingoistic cause with new perceptions of a battle against extinction. You were to meet opposition, they said. Monodimensional life forms who lacked in technological development but were determined enough to band together to destroy the spheres once and for all. This would not just happen in one reality. It would happen in all of them.

That notion seemed ridiculous at first. The spheres were a symbol of hope! You refused to believe that the foundations on which your society was built could fall so easily. How could monodimensional life survive under their influence? That they might find a way seemed unlikely but you could not ignore it as a possibility. After all, had your own people not ascended to their multidimensional existence as the conclusion of their own evolution? The more you thought along these lines, the more they seemed plausible, even logical. Was not the survival instinct strong in all species, including animals? Was it not the reason behind evolution itself? As an accomplished scryer, there was an easy way to find out, to see with your own eyes whether or not rumours of opposition and annihilation were true. The key to the secrets of the web of reality itself lay in your grasp but you did not dare use it. Until today.

How could a feeling so familiar suddenly be so terrifying? How could the mesmeric reverse echo of each breath now carry with it the weight of crushing fate? The sensation of becoming one with the mist, usually a panacea, was now an intolerable irritant. Where you had succumbed to the embrace of the conflux of time and possibility, you now recoiled from it. It was as though you knew the answer already but you would not allow your eyes to see it; if the multiverse had once been a trusted ally, it had now become a hated enemy. Because there it was, right before your eyes, playing out in infinite stereo, in innumerable permutations.

There was no escaping what was to come.