

A vital rescue mission depends on one untested young officer!

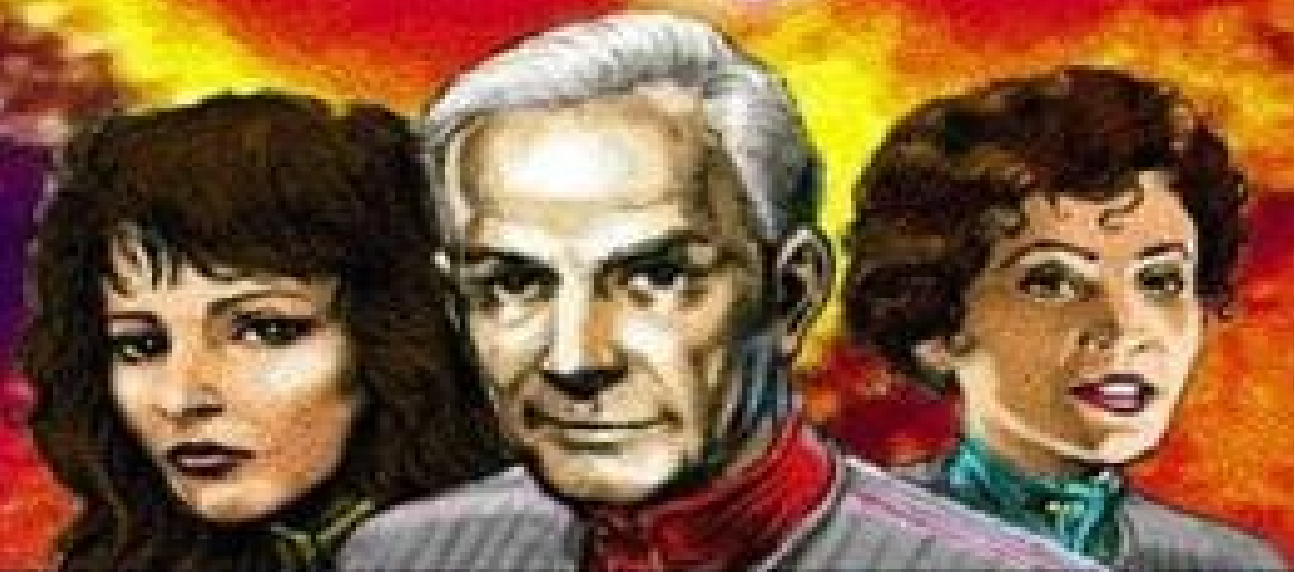
STAR TREK™

S.C.E.

#5

INTERPHASE

Part Two of Two



Dayton Ward and Kevin Dilmore

S.C.E. concept by John J. Ordover and Keith R.A. DeCandido

Other eBooks in the Star Trek®:
Starfleet Corps of Engineers series
from Pocket Books:

#1: *The Belly of the Beast* by Dean Wesley Smith

#2: *Fatal Error* by Keith R.A. DeCandido

#3: *Hard Crash* by Christie Golden

#4: *Interphase Book 1* by Dayton Ward & Kevin Dilmore

#5: *Interphase Book 2* by Dayton Ward & Kevin Dilmore

#6: *Cold Fusion* by Keith R.A. DeCandido

#7: *Invincible Book 1* by David Mack & Keith R.A. DeCandido

#8: *Invincible Book 2* by David Mack & Keith R.A. DeCandido

COMING SOON:

#9: *The Riddled Post* by Aaron Rosenberg

#10: *Gateways Epilogue: Here There Be Monsters* by Keith R.A. DeCandido



INVINCIBLE: BOOK TWO

David Mack & Keith R.A. DeCandido



POCKET BOOKS

New York London Toronto Sydney Singapore

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are products of the authors' imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

An *Original* Publication of **POCKET BOOKS**



POCKET BOOKS, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

Copyright © 2001 by Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved.



STAR TREK is a Registered Trademark of
Paramount Pictures.

This book is published by Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., under exclusive license from Paramount Pictures.

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book or portions thereof in any form whatsoever. For information address Pocket Books, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

ISBN 0-7434-2873-0

First Pocket Books E-Book edition September 2001

POCKET and colophon are registered trademarks of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Visit us on the World Wide Web:

<http://www.SimonSays.com>

<http://www.startrek.com>

I'm worried about Sonnie. And I'm worried about me, too.

The *da Vinci*'s still at yellow alert while we wait to find out what's happening at Deep Space 9. There's every possibility that another war with the Dominion is in the offing. If that's true, we're a long way in for a galaxy of trouble, especially since our first officer's so far away.

Commander Sonya Gomez, first officer of the *da Vinci*, my immediate superior, and a woman I've known and have grown very fond of over the years, is right now in the very distant Nalori Republic. That distance combined with the Nalori's lack of Federation relay stations, means that just a communication to her would take two days to arrive.

I've already sent her two messages, but haven't heard anything back. I hope she's okay. The Nalori don't like the Federation much, and only asked for her because they needed her expertise to help build a subspace accelerator, to help them get chimerium off the planet Sarindar.

A planet full of that super-dense ore is a great find, and I'm glad that we're getting to help mine it. I'm also glad that this will probably mean improved relations with the Nalori.

But I'm not glad that we're potentially on the brink of war, and Sonnie's so far away.

I miss her. And I'm worried about her.

There is a second “monster shii” on Sarindar. At 2342 hours, it broke through the electrified fence that surrounds the work camp. Unlike the previous shii that I killed, and which murdered several workers, this one suffered no appreciable injury. It immediately ripped into the nearest tent, which belonged to Kejahna, the foreperson, and three other Nalori: Erobnos, Caargenne, and Houarner. The creature definitely killed Kejahna—who leapt in front of an attack that would have decapitated Caargenne, and was disemboweled—and gravely injured the other three.

The shii then carried all four bodies out of the camp.

I witnessed most of this, having come to investigate when I first heard the screams of the Nalori being attacked.

While I record this log entry, my assistant Razka is organizing a second hunting party. I have composed a hasty condolence letter to be sent to Kejahna’s family. If Erobnos, Caargenne, and Houarner wind up killed, as I suspect will be the case, I will do the same for their families—assuming I survive. I fear that this creature will not be as easy to stop.

Razka is calling me. The party is ready to go.

~~Letter from Razka on Sarindar to Marig on Nalor, eleventh day of Sendrak, twenty-third year of Togh~~

My wife:

I write to you for the first time since arriving at this dreadful place. The reason is, I fear for my life. Since the cause of the fear still exists, I write. Before I go any further, however, I wish to make a request of you. Please kiss each of my children for me. When you do so, tell each of them that their father loves them. Even the ones who are too young to comprehend. You will understand why I ask this after you read this letter. But please, do that first. Thank you.

Of all my wives, you are the one I dislike the least. So I wish you to have this record of my life in this place. We are building a subspace accelerator here on Sarindar. It will allow our glorious government to harvest chimerium. That, I'm sure, means as much to you as it does to me. But they're paying me, so I won't complain.

The first thing that happened when I got here will amuse you. The foreman issued me a weapon. Me. It took three days just to figure out which was the right end to point. But the foreman insisted. He was a big man named Kejahna. He assigned me to be the aide to the project leader. That used to be Nalag. You would have liked Nalag. He was pleasant. He was also driven insane by this place. Much the same way you drive me insane, to be truthful. After he went mad, the government did something odd. They requested help from the Federation. The Federation sent a woman from Starfleet. I thought that made them madder than Nalag, at first. But Commander Gomez has been magnificent. Several here started calling her "Sañuul" because of her work. She made the load-lifters work. She brought the project back on schedule. She fixed several errors in the subspace accelerator.

She also killed a monster shii.

No, your fears have not been confirmed. I have not gone insane. I sometimes wish I had, but no. The monster shii is real. It is not just the stuff of legends. And Commander Gomez killed it after it attacked and killed several workers.

The problem with legends isn't when they turn out to be true. It's when they turn out to be *half*-true. You see, in all the stories I've heard about the monster shii, I've never heard anyone mention *two*. But there *were* two here. The second one is much bigger than the first. It killed Kejahna and took three others. Commander Gomez told me to organize a search party. She and Kejahna did that the last time a monster shii attacked. I didn't want to go with her, but she insisted. Especially with Kejahna dead. Do you know what shii

told me? That I was the only person she trusted now. Armed with my sonic rifle and the undeserved responsibility, I went out with her.

Sarindar is a beautiful place in the daylight. At night, it is somewhat less so. When the sunlight glints off the flora, it's like walking in a jewel. Without that light, it's like walking in a tomb. Especially when we came across the dead bodies. Houarner, Erobnor and Caargenne, the three who were taken. Also Kejahna's body. We found their remains on the ground, ripped to pieces. Except, of course, for their heads. The monster shii presumably still had them. The one Commander Gomez had killed had taken possession of Kelrek's head.

We continued to follow the trail. It led to a large cave. Commander Gomez told me that the last monster shii was in a cave. This cave was apparently much bigger. But it had the same thing in it. Skulls. Many many skulls from many many animals. Some of them looked quite old. The monster shii had obviously been killing for a long time.

Commander Gomez, for some reason, kept saying that we had done something to provoke the monster. I explained that it didn't need provocation. It simply collected heads. Then she said that if it collected heads, it might be rational. I suppose they teach that sort of silliness in Starfleet. Most of the party thought her to be mad. Zilder, the religious Bolian pilot, summed it up best. "This is not one of Ho'nig's creatures." Ho'nig is his god. From the moment we met, he tried to convert me to worshipping Ho'nig. Unfortunately, his missionary zeal was not very convincing, and was even less so when the monster shii cut his head off.

I froze when that happened. I just stood there and watched as the monster shii leapt out of nowhere and ripped Zilder into pieces. Just two days ago, I was teasing Zilder about his conversion attempts. In fact, I joked that he should have tried to convert the monster shii. Then Commander Gomez would not have had to kill it. Instead, it killed him. Commander Gomez did not hesitate. She fired on the creature. Several others followed in her suit.

I did not. I just stood there. My mouth was agape. I couldn't even raise my weapon. My first thought was that I would never see my children again. That is why I asked you to kiss them earlier. I swore at that moment that the first thing I would do if I made it back alive was express my love for my children.

Not that I *expected* to get back alive. Even as most everyone else fired on the creature, it continued its rampage. The sonic rifle fire didn't even slow it down. This wasn't a total surprise, as it is about twice as big as the first one to attack. That one is a corpse presently sitting in the camp hospital. Its fellow started killing indiscriminately. After

Zilder, it decapitated D'Ren and literally sliced Eridak in two. Entorr started to run away and G'sob ran toward it.

Still I did not move. I just stood in the cave. People were scattering around me. The sh was slicing at anything that came near it. And the only sound I heard was the whining of the rifles. Sonic rifles don't give off any kind of emission, the way a laser would. They just make that whining sound. I heard no screams, though I saw mouths move. I did not hear the sounds of flesh being rendered, though I saw it being done. But all I could hear was the sound of every rifle firing. Every rifle, save my own.

At least until Commander Gomez ordered a retreat. That I did hear. Somehow, then, I found the wherewithal to make my legs move. We ran back to the camp. I came straight to my tent and began writing this letter. I have now fulfilled my oath to myself. When the next window in the suns' interference opens, we will send many messages. The primary one will be to request of the government that the project be terminated and we be allowed to leave. This letter, however, will go as well.

If I die here, please let my children know who their father was. Tell them that I was a coward, or lie to them, it does not matter. Just tell them.

Best regards,
your husband,
Razka

I have returned with the search party. We were able to trace the “monster shii” to its lair—another cave system, about half a kilometer farther from the camp than the smaller cave where the previous shii had its lair. This cave was much larger, and contained a concomitantly larger number of skulls. I was hoping to collect some skulls for samples, for Dr. Dolahn to examine, but the opportunity did not present itself, as the shii attacked. Zilder, D'Ren, and Eridak were all killed, and several others were injured. (Tricorder recording of attack appended.)

It is after midnight, so our next quasar/pulsar window won't be until tomorrow afternoon. When that happens, I intend to send a message to the Nalori government, requesting that we receive permission to suspend the SA project until we can deal with this problem. I'm also preparing a distress signal to send to the *da Vinci*—based on Lt. Commander Duffy's last communiqué, they may not be able to respond to it, but I'd rather play it safe.

I've also instructed the remaining workers to construct a sonic barrier around the camp. The electric fence we put up didn't even slow this creature down, and we need some kind of defense. True, the sonic weapons didn't work, but that may have been because they're not powerful enough. J'Roh—who is now the foreperson, following Kejahna's death—pointed out that we'd have to cannibalize some of the sonic rifles to accomplish this, but, to my mind, it's worth it.

It's not like the weapons were doing us any good....

My next task is to find a way to conduct an active scan on this planet. I need to get proper sensor readings of this area, see what it is that's attracting the shii here. I suspect that we're doing something to provoke it. Animals generally don't attack without a reason. Since it can't digest carbon-based life, it obviously isn't pursuing us for food. Besides, the specificity of the attacks indicates a possibility of intelligence. But this is all speculation until I can get this tricorder to do some actual scans.

A miracle has happened. I was up all night working on it, but I finally figured out a way to adjust the tricorder so I can get at least partial sensor readings of the chimerium-laced area. The resolution is awful and the readings are spotty, but it's better than what we had before, which was nothing. I hope that I get to live long enough to share this breakthrough with Starfleet.

Razka's at my tent....

For the second time on this expedition, Razka has asked me to perform the funeral rites for the people who were killed by the monster shii, which reminded me that I hadn't yet written condolence letters to the families of the ones who died. I already did one for Kejahna's family. I have to admit—I *hate* admit—that I forgot about both duties in the rush of getting the workers to build the barrier and adjusting the tricorder.

I just remembered that time on the *Enterprise*—our first encounter with the Borg. I was an ensign fresh out of the Academy, working in engineering under Geordi La Forge. The Borg cut parts of three decks out of the saucer section—with eighteen people in them. They were missing and presumed assimilated. I kept trying to focus on getting the shields back up, but I couldn't get those eighteen people out of my mind. Geordi said two things to me: "Just put it out of your head" and "We'll have time to grieve later."

But the Nalori peoples have very particular funeral rites. And I'm a part of it now, whether I like it or not.

Besides, there's not a helluva lot I can do until noon, when we send the messages.

The funeral was subdued. The ceremony was for everyone who died except Zilder. I think I did a better job of commending the *mazza* of the dead to the Endless Wind this time. I wish that I didn't have to keep practicing, though.

Eridak, one of the Nalori who died, only had two scars—both on his face, none on his forearm. From what I've learned, those are the basic coming-of-age scars. Every Nalori here has them, but I was the only one I remember who had *only* those two. Which meant he was very young. Too young to die.

Afterward, I checked the tent that Zilder had shared with three other workers, and it turned out that he had made up a will since arriving on Sarindar. Rather than follow any Bolian traditions, his wishes related to the death rites of the Damiani. Zilder had worshipped the Damiani god Ho'nig, and according to the *Se'rbeg*—the holy book of Ho'nig-worshippers—he was required to be buried within three days of death.

That, of course, isn't going to happen. The crystalline nature of this world makes it impossible to bury anything.

Zilder wrote his will on a piece of paper. He had made many corrections and addenda to it during his time here. He left the *Culloden* to the Nalori Republic, "as my thanks for hiring me to work for them."

He left his copy of the *Se'rbeg* to me. He had originally left it to Nalag, my predecessor, but that had been replaced with my name. The exact phrasing was, "To [Nalag, crossed out] Command Sonya Gomez, I leave my most valued copy of the *Se'rbeg*, the holy words of Ho'nig, in the hopes that [he, crossed out] she will find the same enlightenment and glory through it that I found over the years. This is the book that changed my life for the better. I hope it can do the same for [him, crossed out] her."

I stared at the cracked leather binding of the book and shook my head. I had found Zilder's constant religious harping to be irritating from the moment he picked me up in the *Culloden* at Starbase 9 several dozen eternities ago, but now, realizing that I would never hear him imploring me to take Ho'nig into my life again, I found I was going to miss it.

I can't even give him a proper burial.

Dammit, this whole thing is falling apart. Yesterday, we were on schedule and the one danger to the project had been killed. Now, seven more people are dead, work has ground to a halt while we try to defend ourselves against a hostile alien—and try to find out *why* it's attacking us. How the hell did this happen?

I'm going to find out.

I just finished my first scan of the area. So far, nothing. Razka came up to me and asked me what was doing, and I explained to him that I was trying to determine why the shii was attacking.

Razka looked at me like I was insane. “Did you look at the skulls in the cave, Commander? The monster has been killing things on this planet for much longer than this installation has been here. Besides, what does the reason matter?”

“It hasn’t just been killing, it’s been decapitating and saving the skulls. It may be intelligent. We can’t just kill it without finding out why.”

“Perhaps you can’t. And perhaps I can’t.” He got a funny look on his face when he said that. “But there are dozens of workers here who will do whatever is necessary to avenge their comrades. And regardless of your status, Commander, they will not listen to any words you say about it possibly being intelligent or something to talk to. It is an animal, and it has already killed seven men. The only response that anyone here will support is to kill it.”

**~~Transcript of message sent from Nalori Republic Senator Moyya to Commander Sonya Gomo~~
on planet Sarindar, twelfth day of Sendrak, twenty-third year of Togh**

We are distressed by your absurd request to suspend operations on the Sarindar Subspace Accelerator Project. We had been led to believe that the officers of the Federation Starfleet were professionals who did not succumb to the foolish ramblings of old women. To insult the intelligence of this senate by suggesting that you have (again) fallen behind in the project's timetable due to attacks by a "monster shii" is bad enough, but to accompany it with a "recording" of an attack that is so obviously a forgery merely compounds the offense. It is obvious to us that the workers you claim were killed by this "monster" were malingerers and drunks who allowed themselves to be attacked by native fauna. It is equally obvious that Starfleet has sent not their best, as promised, but a incompetent and a fool. There are some voices among the senate who believe that Starfleet simply dressed a foolish woman in a commander's uniform and sent her to us, hoping we would not notice. The only way to prove those voices wrong is to get the project back on schedule.

Therefore your request is denied. Work will continue. Any unauthorized departure from the planet Sarindar will result in the exclusion of those departing *and all other workers on Sarindar* from any and all government work for the rest of their natural lives.

In light of the Nalori Republic's refusal to accede to my request, I have ordered the workers to resume the scheduled construction of the SA. I have lodged a formal protest with the senate and with Starfleet Command over the gross inhumanity being displayed by the senate in this instance. A distress call was also sent out to Starfleet—specifically for the *da Vinci*, but sent on a general Starfleet frequency—fourteen hours prior to the reception of the senate's refusal. While it will take two days for it to reach the Federation, I have faith that someone will respond and, if necessary, evacuate the planet.

Departing is only an option if another ship arrives, as the *Culloden* is keyed to Zilder's DNA. The radical dissimilarity between Bolian DNA and that of any of the races represented on this project—not just that of the assorted Nalori races, but also of my human and Dr. Dolahn's Gallamite genetic structure—renders it impossible to “hot-wire” the *Culloden*, at least with the equipment available to me.

I have instead devoted my resources to restructuring the duty schedule in light of the reduced personnel, maintaining our defense against the shii, and attempting to improve the presently limited ability of the tricorder to scan the surrounding area despite the high concentrations of chimerium. I am hoping that Dr. Dolahn's autopsy of the first shii will give us some idea of how we can either defend against or communicate with this creature. In addition, I intend to take a bioscan of a “normal” shii, give me a base for my readings.

I will continue to send updates and recordings of the monster shii to the Nalori senate, in the hope that they will come to their senses.

I just finished a trip outside the encampment to take a bioreading of the shii. The normal-sized ones are roughly the size of a pony, and they move through the crystalline landscape with an impressive grace. After twice nearly being killed by the mutant versions—or whatever they are—it’s nice to be reminded that the “normal” ones are quite elegant.

In fact, they’re more noble than a good chunk of the sentients presently on the planet. I had to put someone on guard over the *Culloden* after four different incidents of people breaking into the ship to try to get off-planet. They didn’t succeed, of course, but that’s hardly the point. These are people who make their living working for the government. That same government has made it clear that an attempt to leave the planet will result in them never working again. A lot of these people have families, but they’re willing to risk their livelihood to get out of here.

I, on the other hand, am willing to risk going out-side the sonic barrier to get those bioscans. Luckily, I wasn’t attacked by the “monster.”

Not that anyone would have volunteered to come along to protect me. Nobody’s called me “Sañuu” since the massacre at the cave, and I’ve been getting the same doleful looks that I got when I first arrived. Nobody’s invited me to join them for meals, either.

The project is even more behind schedule, with much less than a day’s worth of work getting done on either of the last two days. Everyone wants to leave. No one wants to work.

And I can’t blame them.

But I need to find out what is causing the shii to attack us. There *has* to be a reason.

Someone’s raising the alarm.

Another attack. Five people are dead—the guard on the *Culloden* and the latest four who had tried to commandeer it. While they were trying to break into the ship—I'd placed a coded lock on it, along with a recording device—the shii attacked. The ship is docked outside the perimeter of the sonic barrier, so the shii had a clear path to them. In fact, I'm stunned that none of the others who've attempted escape before them were similarly attacked.

All five corpses were missing their heads.

One thing I did notice on the recording is that one of the victims—G'sob, one of the Osina assigned to the tubing detail—managed to wound the shii. His weapon was set on a lower intensity, but a higher frequency than normal. I checked his weapon—the shii left it behind—and its reading indicated a different setting from what it had actually fired.

For the first time since I arrived on Sarindar, the substandard equipment is working in my favor. Thanks to G'sob's rifle being defective, we now know that we can wound the creature.

As good news goes, however, this isn't much. I suspect that things will only get worse.

Things have gotten worse.

Half the workers have refused to leave their tents. The ones who still have sonic weapons—many of them were cannibalized to make the sonic barrier around the encampment—are clutching them to their persons and threatening to shoot anything that comes near them. They've all readjusted the weapons to the setting G'sob used.

I've tried to get them to go to work, but I have no hold over them anymore. The senate's decree has served to completely undercut any authority I had with these people, even as it undercut their own authority. No one here can possibly take seriously a body that refuses to accept the existence of something most of us have seen with our own eyes. And yet, the fact that they don't believe what I tell them about the same creature has given the workers carte blanche to ignore my orders.

Neither the tubing nor the mining mechanics are finished, even though they should have been done by now. The delivery system is off-line, and probably will remain that way—especially since the three most talented members of that particular detail are now dead. In my next message to the senate, I intend to ask for replacements since they can't be bothered to actually shut down the project. There's no way I can complete the SA without sufficient personnel, and even if the remaining crew worked their hardest—which they most definitely won't—we couldn't finish this thing.

I've been scanning for twenty-eight hours, and I can't find a single reason why the shii is attacking. I'm half-tempted to go back to the cave and try to do a scan there, but I don't think it's worth the risk—yet. But it may come to that. I'm still awaiting Dr. Dolahn's autopsy report on the shii I killed. He said he'd get to it today, but he's said that every day since I first brought it to him.

I've also come up with an idea for how to trap the creature without killing it.

I have managed to boost worker morale slightly. The tubing was finally finished this morning, so I've reassigned them to construct a trap for the shii. This was work they could actually get enthusiastic about, since they're stuck on the planet for the time being. (My numerous communiqués to the senate have met with a resounding silence. I'm hoping to get a reply from the *da Vinci* tomorrow.)

The principle of the trap is quite simple: it's a box that's divided into two halves by a set of metal bars. I had been hoping for duranium, but all that's available is a steel composite left over from the old tubing. Three people stand on one side of the bars, armed. The other side is open. Based on the bioscience I took of the regular shii, there's one particular ruby-like flower that they are fond of eating. The plan is to place several of those flowers into the open end of the trap. Once the shii enters, a force field will be activated, trapping the creature inside. The three armed people then fire on the creature at the same setting, which should be enough to stun it, or at least to subdue it.

The detail has taken to the task with relish, and I'm hoping they'll have it done by nightfall. Kugon, Amuk, and Entorr have volunteered to serve as the executors of the trap.

Supplemental

The trap has failed. Entorr, Kugot, and Amuk are dead. One of the weapons misfired and damaged one of the bars. The shii flailed and sliced through the bar. All three missed the shii with their shots, and then were, unfortunately, prime targets once the bars went down. It is unclear why the three of them did not escape through the rear hatch, but their failure to do so resulted in their tragic deaths. Entorr was killed by decapitation. The other two were beheaded after they were killed. The creature departed with all three heads.

I doubt the creature will fall for the same trap again, and we don't have the material to reconstruct in any case.

I am still waiting for the final autopsy report from Dr. Dolahn on the shii that I killed. Scans of the region still fail to provide any reason why the shii would be attacking us.

Okay, my official log has the formal report about how exactly Entorr, Kugot, and Amuk were killed

I need to say, however, that it was the most pathetic sight I have ever seen in my life! Much as I hate to speak ill of the dead, I really have to wonder about those three. Did they *have* a death wish?

Admittedly, part of it was the fault of the ever-sub-standard Nalori equipment. At least one of the rifles was on the wrong setting.

But still—how the hell can you *miss* something at *point-blank range*?

The shii took the bait we laid out. I activated the force field. The shii realized it was trapped and started making this squeaky noise. I gave the order to fire.

And they *missed*.

Worse, one of them—Entorr, whose weapon was on the wrong setting—hit one of the bars. That weakened the steel enough so that it started to buckle. The shii must have noticed this—or maybe they would have attacked the bars anyhow. Either way, it sliced through one of the bars, leaving the three Nalori vulnerable—

—especially since they panicked and started firing wildly instead of doing what they were supposed to do if something like this happened, which was *run out the back door*. I had made sure that there was a method of escape in case something like this happened, and they *didn't use it*.

I've been sending regular updates on the situation to the senate, including images of every attack on the shii. I'm really of two minds as to whether or not to send this one, as it makes all of us look like idiots.

Naturally, everyone's blaming me for the trap not working, even though it *should* have worked, and those three jackasses had done what they were *supposed* to do.

Okay, that's not fair. They panicked. It happens. But that panic got them killed.

The last batch of messages included one from the *da Vinci*. Even though it's time-stamped two days after I sent out the distress call, it makes no acknowledgment of it. I've continued to send it at every opportunity, so, with any luck, they *will* get it eventually. According to Kieran, things are going better—*it turns out that there isn't going to be a war*, and the *da Vinci* has been assigned to help the folks at Deep Space 9 put the station back together. Fabian Stevens used to be assigned to DS9, so he's probably happy about the assignment.

Right now, I *really* wish I was back with them. I wish I could watch Fabian and Pattie crawl around a warp core with me, listen to Carol make one of her snide remarks, try to decipher Soloman's chirping computer-speak, watch Bart write a letter on paper to Anthony, hear Captain Gold go on about his grandchildren. Hell, I wouldn't even mind listening to Corsi complain.

But most of all, I miss Kieran's smile. That dopey, aw-shucks smile that he always gets on his face when he decides to torture me by reminding me of when I spilled hot chocolate on Captain Picard.

Work on the SA has crawled to a halt. The team that put the trap together is down to one person now, and he refuses to work. Nobody's tried to steal the *Culloden*—mainly because of what happened last time—but nobody's willing to work, or talk to me, either.

I'm going to go to the camp hospital and sit on Dolahn until he gives me an autopsy report.

~~Partial transcript of autopsy report of sample S019 (a.k.a. “monster shii”) by Dr. Dolahn Sarindar Medical Unit, thirteenth day of Sendrak, twenty-third year of Togh~~

DOLAHN: The creature also shows signs of—Ah, Commander Gomez, I was just going to summon you.

GOMEZ: I see you’re actually working on the autopsy.

DOLAHN: Don’t sound so surprised, Commander. I admit, I’ve been dilatory in getting to this, but caring for Kani and Rimlek has been difficult—I almost lost them a couple of times.

GOMEZ: I’m sorry, Doctor, I didn’t realize ...

DOLAHN: Yes, well, there was no way you could’ve known.

GOMEZ: Especially since you didn’t tell me. If you actually gave me reports ...

DOLAHN: [makes throat-clearing noise] Yes, well, be that as it may, I have begun the autopsy, and I’ve come to rather a shocking revelation.

GOMEZ: What?

DOLAHN: Whatever this creature is, it *isn’t* native to Sarindar.

GOMEZ: But—

DOLAHN: It may *appear* to be a shii—and rather a mutated one at that—but it isn’t. Take look at this. Some of these match the way the internal organs of a shii are *supposed* to be arranged, but half of them aren’t even actual organs. I’ve been studying silicon-based life-forms for most of my career, and I can’t make heads nor feet out of any of th—

GOMEZ: These aren’t organs.

DOLAHN: I beg your pardon?

GOMEZ: These aren’t organs.

DOLAHN: What are you doing with that thing? I thought those Starfleet contraptions of yours were just glorified recording devices on this planet.

GOMEZ: I’ve been able to modify this one to get at least partial readings, even with the chimerium. And, according to the readings I’m getting right now, these don’t behave like “proper” organs because they’re biomechanical.

DOLAHN: Commander, most silicon-based life might read on a tricorder as “biomechanical” due to the nature of their—

- [download online Vedic Mathematics Made Easy](#)
- [read Where Rainbows End online](#)
- [**click The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah \(SUNY Series in Judaica: Hermeneutics, Mysticism, and Religion\) book**](#)
- [read online Contemporary Poetry: A Retrospective From the "Quarterly Review of Literature" \(Princeton Legacy Library\) for free](#)

- <http://anvilpr.com/library/The-Mariner.pdf>
- <http://korplast.gr/lib/Decode-and-Conquer--Answers-to-Product-Management-Interviews.pdf>
- <http://test.markblaustein.com/library/Knowledge-in-the-Time-of-Cholera--The-Struggle-over-American-Medicine-in-the-Nineteenth-Century.pdf>
- <http://weddingcellist.com/lib/Philosophy-and-Living.pdf>