

Walking In Danger: Part II

Chapter Five

The next morning Julie reported to the holodeck promptly. She didn't want the commander finding anything else wrong with her. Julie had spent the entire night reviewing the technical manual Harding had given her, but still didn't have a clue as to why he was paying the extra attention to her.

As she entered the holodeck, she found Harding asleep in the captain's chair. If she didn't know any better it looked as if Harding had slept their all night.

"Commander." Julie said while tapping Harding on the shoulder.

Harding opened his eyes "What?" He sat straight up and straightened his uniform. "Oh." He said trying to clear his head.

"Are you all right?" Julie asked.

Harding yawned while nodding his head, "Yes. Just a late night." He pressed a few buttons on the armrest of the command chair re-initializing the holodeck safeties trying not to alert the ensign to his actions. "Shall we begin?"

Julie sat down at the flight station and noticed that the configuration wasn't as confusing as the day before. She could easily identify which controls did what. At her side was the manual Harding had given her.

"Computer begin simulation."

The bridge came to life. Julie found herself dodging various obstacles as she did the day before, but this time it was easier. She didn't have any problems and her score was almost perfect.

Harding was shocked at the overnight transformation. "Ensign?"

Julie nodded. "Told you I was a quick study." She said.

Harding stood from the chair, "I'll be right back." Taking a PADD, he exited the holodeck.

Outside the doors, Harding activated his commbadge. "Harding to Evans."

"Evans here."

Harding looked towards the holodeck doors. "I thought you said she wasn't a qualified pilot."

"She isn't, why?"

"I think you'd better come down here sir." Harding said.

"I'm on my way."

The commlink closed.

* * *

A moment later Captain Evans turned the corner to find Harding standing outside the holodeck doors.

"Commander."

Harding stood at attention. "Sir."

Evans sighed, "At east. Report."

Harding pressed a few buttons on the PADD and handed it to Evans. "She's not what she appears to be Sir." He said, "Her Academy record stated that she is a lousy pilot, yet right now she's flying that simulation like I've never seen."

Evans remained silent as he looked over the reports.

Harding started to pace around, "What is Necheyev thinking?"

Evans shook his head, "Maybe there's a misunderstanding." He said, "We have to have the right person."

"I'm having second thoughts about this mission sir. We cannot allow her to go down there, it would be wrong."

Harding said, "She's a fine officer. I don't want to be the cause."

Evans held up a hand. "Nonsense commander. She's fresh out of the academy, nothing more nothing less. See to it that she's ready." He handed the PADD back to Harding. "We arrive at our destination in two hours."

Harding nodded, "Aye sir." He turned and entered the holodeck.

TWO HOURS LATER

Harding leaned forward in the command chair. "Nice job ensign, I'm amazed t how quickly you were able to adapt to the controls. Your Starfleet profile clearly doesn't do you justice."

Julie turned in her chair, "It was like I said sir, I'm a quick study."

Harding stood from the chair, "Let's go."

"Sir?" Julie stood from the conn.

"You have the conn this watch," He said "On the real bridge this time."

Julie felt her stomach turn. She had only been on the ship for a few days and he wanted her to fly. She didn't feel up to the task. Sure Julie had just proven herself on the holodeck, but piloting an actual vessel was much different than the sims. "Aye sir" was all she could say.

* * *

The Bridge was full of activity. Several officers were walking to various bridge stations preparing for their mission. As the turbolift doors opened and Ensign Tompson entered the Bridge, Evans looked up from his command chair and smiled. "Ensign, take the conn."

Harding was right behind Julie. He walked up to Evans and gave a thumb up. Evans simply nodded in agreement. The ensign would soon prove herself to him and the rest of the ship.

As Julie sat down at the controls she recognized the configuration immediately and felt comfortable. It was as though she belonged at the post and had been there for days.

"Helm." Evans said, "Take us out of warp and into the DMZ."

Julie activated a few controls and nodded, "Aye sir. Dropping out of warp." She pressed a few more buttons, "We are entering the DMZ sir."

Evans pressed a few buttons on his chair, "I'm sending the exact coordinates of the troop convoy to your station. Lay in a course and engage at full impulse."

Julie nodded "Aye."

After a few minutes, she disengaged the Impulse drive. "We have arrived at the specified coordinates." Harding said, "The troop convoy is not here." He searched the tactical panel in front of him. "Long range sensors are not picking it up either sir." He paused, "I am picking up several pieces of debris and traces of recent weapons fire."

Evans checked the readouts on a display screen attached to his chair. The weapons fire was consistent with Dominion disrupters. When Harding said recent he meant recent. From the looks of it, the vessels had been destroyed five hours earlier.

Evans hit his arm against the chair, "We should have been alerted" Standing from his command chair he walked towards a sensor display screen at the back of the bridge. "Are there any Jem'Hadar vessels in the vicinity?"

"No sir." Harding reported. "Hold on. I'm picking up wreckage on the third planet."

Evans looked towards Harding's direction "The convoy?"

Harding shrugged his shoulders, "I'm not certain. It might be."

Julie activated the main impulse drive, "Shall I lay in a course sir?"

Evans nodded, "Yes, engage."

The Fearless approached slowly upon the third planet in the star system. It was reddish brown with black clouds covering half of the planet's surface. After a few minutes, the vessel was in high orbit.

Evans looked to Harding "Harding, gather an investigation party. Beam down to the wreckage and report your findings."

Harding nodded, "Aye sir." He pointed to an officer across the bridge. They headed towards the turbolift.

Evans walked towards the conn. "Ensign Tompson, go with them."

Julie spun around in her chair with a look of surprise. "Me sir?"

Evans nodded, "You need the experience."

Julie stood from the conn. She was confused at what had been going on over the past few days. She still didn't have an answer as to why people were still interested in her and her abilities. It didn't make any sense. As she crossed the bridge, Evans gave her a look as if to say goodbye. Was he not expecting to see her again? She didn't know. Julie joined the two officers in the turbolift.

Evans watched as the doors closed and the lift took the officers to the transporter room

Chapter Six

On the surface of the planet, the three officers materialized. Harding pulled out his tricorder and proceeded to make scans. The security officer did as well. Tompson just looked around taking in the environment.

They were standing outside a small town. Over head were several dark clouds that engulfed the night sky. Julie pulled out her tricorder and took a few readings. There was low level seismic activity over a kilometer away. Lightening could be heard and seen in the distance. Rain would be coming shortly, but they would be fine for the time being.

Harding walked over towards Tompson. "Ensign, what do you know about this planet?"

Julie shrugged. All she could remember is what she had read in her books at the academy. "Just another planet left by the Cardassians when they pulled out of the DMZ two years ago. Federation colonists took over after they left and have been here ever since."

Harding nodded. "That's right."

"Sir." The security officer said, "I have found the wreckage." He pointed to a place about three meters away.

Harding nodded, "Let's go."

* * *

Aboard the Fearless, Evans was monitoring his away team's progress. "Incoming transmission." The computer voice said.

Evans stood from his chair "Computer, transfer message to my ready room." He exited the bridge and walked towards his ready room.

"Acknowledged."

* * *

On the planet's surface, the away team stood in front of a crashed vessel. Harding continued to make scans. "She's been through a lot." He looked to the security officer, "Go inside and check it out."

The officer nodded and left Harding and Juile outside.

Harding looked to Juile "Ensign, I want you to go into that village we saw near the beam down point. Get those people ready for evacuation." He paused, "Contact me once you're done."

Julie nodded, "Aye sir."

The trip to the city didn't take long. Once she arrived, Juile recognized the buildings. She had been there on a trip with her father four years ago before she entered the Academy. They had gotten word that some survivors of her home world managed to relocate to the settlement. As she walked towards the center of the city, she saw several people just sitting and talking. Julie approached the group.

"It is important that you evacuate this village, please go to your homes and gather what you can carry."

A man approached her. "Who are you?"

Julie almost slapped her head, she didn't even tell these people who she was and where she had come from. "My name is Julie Tompson, I'm an officer aboard the Federation Starship Fearless."

The man shook his head, "What does the Federation want now? Haven't they given us enough grief?" He paused, "Is this about that crashed vessel?"

"We don't have time to discuss this," Julie explained "I'm sure that once the situation is under control you can return to your homes."

The man stood firm. "No, we will not be pushed around anymore."

Tompson pulled out her phaser. "I don't want to force you, but I will if necessary." She set the phaser for low stun. "I will carry you out of here if I have to."

The man looked at the phaser, "As long as we can get our homes back."

Julie nodded, "Like I said, I'm sure it won't take long."

"Very well." He walked towards the group of people. After a moment or two, they dispersed and headed towards their respective homes.

Julie smiled. "Tompson to Harding."

"Harding here, go ahead." The commander's voice came through the comm channel.

"The evacuation is under way sir." She said, "Awaiting further orders."

"Good work ensign," Harding said "Stay there, I'll meet you shortly. Harding out."

ONE HOUR LATER

Harding walked into the city and found Tompson sitting by a fountain. When she saw him, she stood from a stone bench. "Commander."

Harding nodded, "We're almost done here."

"What happened sir?" Julie asked.

Harding looked towards the crash site and back to the ensign. "I'm not entirely sure. We believe a Dominion vessel attacked the ship, they left no survivors. From the looks of it, the vessel didn't even have a chance."

Julie nodded, "Just like the Dominion." She paused as a heavy storm front appeared from the East. It wasn't like anything she had ever seen before. Taking her tricorder, she made scans. "What is it?" She asked Harding.

Harding held out his tricorder. "I'm not sure. Whatever it is I don't like the looks of it. As it gets closer, it's increasing in strength."

"I suggest we get out of here." Julie said.

Harding nodded, "Agreed." He tapped his commbadge. "Harding to Fearless."

Static.

"Fearless, respond!"

".this is.o.hea." A reply came.

Harding took his commbadge off his uniform and ran a diagnostic. "The storm must be interfering." He altered a few circuits and tried again. "Harding to Fearless."

"Fearless here." Evans said. "We've been trying to contact you. Report."

Harding continued "Some kind of electromagnetic storm has appeared, we need an emergency beam out."

The commline went dead.

Harding tapped his badge. "Harding to Fearless. Come in."

Nothing, not even static.

Julie was getting frightened. "What now?"

"We need to get everyone out." He was cut off as a transporter beam took him away. The Fearless had apparently cut through the disturbance of the storm.

Julie looked towards the village, she would soon be aboard the Fearless; but what about the people who lived there? Had they been through this type of storm before? She hadn't remembered anything like it when she last visited. Julie tapped her commbadge, "Tompson to Fearless."

There was no response.

Villagers started coming out of their houses approaching the ensign. They wanted answers, answers that she couldn't give. She said the situation would be over in a few minutes, but that was turning out to be false.

The man she spoke to before approached her. "Ensign, what is going on?"

Julie looked at the man, "I'm not sure." She said. "I have lost contact with my vessel."

A piercing scream sounded through the night sky as if it were coming from the clouds itself. Julie covered her ears, it was too painful for her to bear. The scream lasted for about a half-hour. As she looked around, the villagers were dropping to the ground in pain. She too fell unconscious, unable to withstand the noise.

A transporter beam came and grabbed the ensign and a few others from the surface. The storm subsided as the clouds dispersed into the atmosphere of the planet.

Tompson awoke aboard a vessel. She looked around, several of the colonies inhabitants were with her in a dark cold cell. Julie tried to call out to the others, but found her voice to be gone. She couldn't speak, at least for the moment.

Several alert klaxons sounded off in the cell as terrible as the sonic pulse on the planet. The group passed out more quickly this time around, after only ten minutes of listening to it.

Five days later, she awoke at Starfleet Medical in San Francisco.

Chapter Seven

".That's all I remember sir." Julie said concluding her report to Admiral Rabb at Starfleet Headquarters.

Rabb finished making notes on a PADD. "Thank you for your testimony ensign. I'm sure Starfleet Security will find it most useful."

"Admiral, what happened to the Fearless? Did they get out of there safely?" Julie asked.

Rabb paused, thinking about how to answer the question, "The Fearless has been reported missing. We believe she was destroyed by the Dominion. I'm sorry."

Julie Nodded, she didn't know whether to cry or scream.

"I would like you to report back to Starfleet Medical for a final checkup before giving you your new assignment." Rabb said trying to change the subject, "Once you're done report back to me."

Tompson nodded, "Aye sir." She exited the room.

Beep Beep.

Rabb rubbed his eyes. "Come."

Captain Evans entered the room. As he approached the desk, he looked out the window. "What does she remember?"

Rabb handed a PADD to the captain. "Almost everything." He said. "But don't worry, I sent her back to Starfleet Medical. I've ordered that they purge her memory."

Evans looked from the PADD "Do you think that's wise sir?"

Rabb shook his head. "No, but she's not ready for what's out there captain." He said, "Let her have a few more years of experience, then we'll try it again."

Evans nodded, "Yes sir. I just thought."

"That she was the one." Rabb said completing the sentence. "So did Necheyev. But you were both wrong." He paused, "One day she will be ready, then she can be a part of so much more."

Evans tapped the PADD in his hands, "What about her father?"

Rabb took the PADD back from Evans, "We've taken care of that as well, don't worry about it, everything is taken care of. Dismissed."

Evans stood at attention, turned around and exited the office. He didn't approve of his actions over the past week, but now it was necessary. As he walked down a hallway Evans stopped by a window overlooking the medical complex. He watched as Tompson entered the compound. Soon she would forget her training aboard the Fearless, and soon the horrible memories of that planet would be gone.

* * *

Captain's Log, Stardate 52033.6:

I'm on my way to Starfleet Medical to meet my new Helm Officer, Ensign Julie Tompson who has been in some kind of shuttle accident. After I meet with the ensign, I will report aboard the Intrepid-class U.S.S. Fresno and take command.

Ensign Tompson woke up in bed at Starfleet Medical. She looked around the room. A man wearing a Starfleet uniform was standing in the doorway. He walked towards the bed. "Ensign Tompson?"

Julie nodded her head. "Yes."

The man extended a hand, "I'm Captain John Burke. Commanding Officer of the Federation Starship Fresno."

Julie shook the officer's hand. "What happened?"

"You were in a shuttle accident." Burke said, "The doctors say you'll be fine."

Julie was confused as ever. "I don't remember." She said trying to recall the past, but failed to do so.

Burke smiled, "It's all right ensign. I just wanted to introduce myself and welcome you aboard." He paused, "I'll see you in a week." He handed a PADD to the ensign, "Here are your orders to be part of the Fresno's crew under my command."

Julie accepted the orders and tried to read through them but found it difficult to do so. She placed the PADD on a table next to her bed, "Yes sir."

"I'll let you get some rest." Burke finished as he exited the room.

Outside the recovery room, Admiral Necheyev met him. "Captain Burke." She said greeting him.

Burke shook the admiral's hand. "Admiral."

"I see you've met your new Helm officer."

Burke nodded. "Yes, but I'm concerned about her condition."

Necheyev shook her head, "Don't worry captain, we've all dropped a shuttle into a pond before." She said, "She'll be fine."

Burke nodded, "Yes I suppose so." He said, "I'd better get going, don't want to be late for the Fresno's launch. If you'll excuse me Admiral."

Necheyev nodded her head, "Of course."

Burke left the admiral alone in the hallway.

As Necheyev looked through the door to Julie's room, she could only guess at what the young ensign would eventually become. What she would eventually contribute to Starfleet and the rest of the Federation Family. She only hoped that her original suspicions about the officer would be correct. But only time would tell.

The End