

Space...the Final Frontier.

Lieutenant Commander Jada Lightfoot, followed by Doctor Neal Hogan and Lieutenant Yoshi Nakamara, slowly approached the old stone building. She had her phaser drawn as she carefully circumvented the debris of destroyed buildings between her and the only remaining structure in the center of the missing archaeologists' camp.

Nakamara turned quickly with his phaser pointed toward the demolished forested area a few feet away as he thought he heard the cracking of broken tree limbs behind him. "Commander!"

Lightfoot and Hogan spun around to see what had startled the security chief. "What is it, Lieutenant?" Lightfoot asked.

"I heard something behind us, Sir," Nakamara said. "We're being watched."

Doctor Hogan activated the tricorder that he carried. He scanned the area around the trio's position. "Other than the three of us and several hundred small insects, there aren't any life readings within two kilometers," he stated.

"I know I heard something, Doctor," Yoshi Nakamara said, slightly perturbed by Hogan's condescending tone. "And it wasn't the sound of mosquitoes."

Jada Lightfoot put her hand on Yoshi's shoulder. "Take it easy, Lieutenant. Maybe it was the wind blowing a limb out of one of the trees."

Nakamara hoped that Lightfoot was right; but despite the fact that the tricorder did not register anything, his instincts told him that someone...or *something* was near, perhaps watching. "Maybe you're right, Commander," Nakamara said without believing it. "But I'd feel more comfortable if some of my security section beamed down."

Lightfoot smiled at the security chief. "I appreciate your caution, Lieutenant, but I think you might be overreacting," she said. The first officer turned back toward the structure and, followed by Doctor Neal Hogan, entered through the open doorway.

Nakamara looked back toward the woods and peered into the thick brush, his eyes searching for any sign of movement. When he did not see anything out of the ordinary, he turned and followed Lightfoot and Hogan into the dilapidated building. Still, Yoshi Nakamara could not shake the feeling that they were not alone.

To Boldly Go: Crossover

A U.S.S. Providence story

By Cleve Johnson

Captain's Log: Stardate 55496.2

We are orbiting Tucker Epsilon IV in search of a missing team of archaeologists that have been investigating the disappearance of the planet's inhabitants two hundred thirty years ago. It's been four hours since Lieutenant Commander Lightfoot and the rest of the away team has checked in. All attempts to make contact with them have been

unsuccessful and I am more than a little worried. I have already sent three security teams to search for the away team; but with the exception of our search parties, there's no indication of any humanoid life forms on the planet's surface. First, the archeology team disappeared; now, three of my officers seemed to have joined them...in oblivion.

Commander Blake Adams slowly paced back and forth in front of the command chair. He stopped momentarily to stare at the image of the rotating planet on the large main viewer that dominated the front of the bridge. He resumed his pacing and stepped down the steps to the lower level, and stopped next to the science console. He stared at the back of the science officer's head. "Anything, Lieutenant?"

Lieutenant Maria Gonzalez turned in her chair and tilted her head upward to face Adams. "Sorry, Commander," the twenty-six-year-old woman said with worry etched on her face. "The search parties are the only people that show up on sensors."

Blake shook his head. "People don't just disappear," he said in a curt tone.

"No, Sir," Gonzalez agreed as she turned her attention back to her console to continue running sensor scans of the planet below.

Blake heard the quiver in Lieutenant Gonzalez' voice and realized that he had taken his frustration out on her. "Sorry, Maria. I shouldn't have barked at you."

Maria Gonzalez looked up and smiled. "I understand, Sir. This is a very stressful situation."

"That doesn't give me the right to take it out on *you*," Blake stated with a slight upward turn of his lips. "Keep trying, Lieutenant." Blake Adams turned and quickly walked up the steps and stopped in front of the Engineering/OPS console that was positioned directly behind the command chair.

Lieutenant Mary Goodman, the chief engineer and OPS manager, looked up to meet her CO's gaze. "Skipper?"

Blake stared at Lieutenant Goodman for several moments before speaking. "I'm going to go against Starfleet protocols, Mary, and go down to the surface."

Lieutenant Goodman stared at Blake, knowing what his next statement would be. "I think you should reconsider, Sir. Your first officer is missing and your second officer is already on the planet coordinating the search." Goodman gently shook her head. "You're indispensable, Commander."

Blake frowned, knowing that the chief engineer was right. But he also tired of doing nothing while members of his crew were missing. "I'm going down there to find our friends. You're in command, Mary." Blake started toward the turbolift.

"Wait, Commander," Lieutenant Gonzalez said. "Three more life signs just appeared on the planet."

Blake rushed back to the science console. "Where?"

Gonzalez' fingers flew across the LCARS touchpads. "Among the ruins, Sir. Same place where they disappeared."

Blake started toward the turbolift. “Mary, recall all search parties and have the transporter beam everyone off the surface,” he said as he entered the turbolift. “I’m going to meet them and find out what happened.”

Blake Adams barely heard Mary Goodman’s “Aye Ca...” as the lift doors cut her off in mid-sentence.



The doors to the transporter room parted and Commander Blake Adams rushed into the room. He ignored Lieutenant Commander T’Les and those who made up the search teams and stopped in front of his first officer. He noticed that her uniform tunic had a rip through the shoulder and there was dirt and dried blood splattered all over her uniform. Doctor Hogan’s and Lieutenant Nakamara’s uniforms appeared in about the same condition as Lightfoot’s and Yoshi had dried blood on the side of his head. “What happened, Jada?” Blake asked as his eyes took in the condition of the away team.

We were checking out the ruins, looking for the archeological team,” Lieutenant Commander Jada Lightfoot began. “We entered one of the buildings and...”



The room, an alien laboratory, was in shambles. Whether from an attack or a terrible storm, Jada Lightfoot could not tell. Broken limbs and tree leaves long dead were scattered throughout the room, covering chairs and electronic consoles.

A cylindrical machine occupied the center of the room. Jada approached it and activated her tricorder. She scanned the object, which had several lights that occasionally flashed on and off and it emitted a faint humming sound. As she approached the machine it hummed louder.

“Be careful, Commander,” Nakamara warned. “It may be dangerous.”

Lightfoot never turned her gaze from the machine as she responded. “It’s okay, Lieutenant.” She continued to step closer to the machine, the humming continued to grow louder with each step.

The machine began to glow and in a sudden, blinding flash of light, everything changed. The lab was in pristine condition; the debris was gone. A humanoid male wearing a gray lab coat over a single-piece green jumpsuit rose from his chair and cautiously stepped toward the away team. He stopped when he noticed that one of the new arrivals held what he perceived to be a weapon. “W...w...welcome to M’rentos,” the alien said nervously. “I am called Vor’Tenik. How do I address you?”

Jada Lightfoot took a step forward. “I’m Lieutenant Commander Jada Lightfoot of the United Federation of Planets starship *Providence*,” she said politely. “With me is Doctor Neil Hogan, our ship’s chief medical officer, and Lieutenant Yoshi Nakamara, chief of security.” She had pointed at each of the men in turn. “Can you tell us what happened? How we got here?”

“Commander,” Yoshi interrupted, “don’t you think we should find out about the archeology team first?”

Jada looked back toward the security chief with her eyebrows beginning to narrow a silent accusation, but then she realized that Yoshi was correct with his interjection to keep her on track. Her facial expression softened. “Quite right, Lieutenant,” she said. “Thanks for reminding me.”

The *Providence*’s first officer turned back to face the alien scientist that still stood before her and the other away team members. “Sir, have you seen any others that look like us?”

“Several days ago a group of scientists appeared just as you did just now,” Vor’Tenik stated. “Two appeared to be of your species, but the other three were different. One of those looked much like you but had ears that were misshapen. The others had blue skin and no hair.”

“The team is made up of two humans, two Bolians, and a Vulcan,” Doctor Hogan stated as he pulled out his tricorder to scan for the team.

“Do you know where the scientists went, Doctor Vor’Tenik?” Jada asked.

The alien, his reddish skin growing darker, turned and walked a few steps and turned around again to face the Starfleet officers. “They were arrested as spies,” he reluctantly said. “They are being held in the capital city, eight *uneetas* to the south.”

“I take it that *uneetas* is a measurement of distance,” Hogan said in his typical crotchety tone. “How many meters, or kilometers does that translate into?”

The alien looked at the doctor quizzically. He then raised a finger toward the ceiling and turned around saying, “Ah, let me show you on the map.” Vor’Tenik led the three officers toward a console against the nearby wall and flipped switches and pressed several buttons. A digital image appeared on a small screen, showing the building that they were in. “This is where we are,” he said, pointing to the image on the screen. The alien pressed a few more buttons and the image of the building shrank to a mere fraction of its previous size as the map image zoomed out to reveal the forested area surrounding the building and several other small images of buildings to the south. One of the buildings near the eastern edge of the building cluster was highlighted by a yellow flashing light on the screen. “This is the detention center where they are kept.”

Jada looked at the map. “Your estimate, Lieutenant?”

Yoshi stepped closer to get a good look at the screen. He did some rough calculations in his head. “I’d say between two and three kilometers, Commander.”

“That’s my guess as well,” Jada said. “We could walk it in less than an hour.”

Yoshi Nakamura faced the alien. “Why were they arrested?” Yoshi said in a harsher tone than he had intended. “Why were they considered spies?”

“My people are on the verge of a technological breakthrough,” Vor’Tenik stated. “A breakthrough that frightens many of my people. We have recently learned how to open a doorway into other dimensions, parallel to our own. In fact, that is the nature of my work here.” The alien’s eyes flashed over toward the quietly humming machine in the center of the lab. “My people fear that possessing this technology will draw some of our interstellar neighbors—hostile ones—to our world to try to take possession of this new

technology.” Vor’Tenik paused and allowed his eyes to focus on the machine. “I believe that your archeology team...and you...came from a parallel world.”

“You’re probably right, Vor’Tenik,” Jada stated. “Before we appeared here, we were in a room identical to this one, but it had been demolished in a storm...or battle. The only thing working was that machine,” she said, pointing to the device in the room’s center. “I scanned it with my tricorder and there was a flash of light. And now we’re here.”

“Your scanning device must have triggered the dimensional generator,” Vor’Tenik said. “I should send you back before the security forces discover your presence.”

“What about the archeology team?” Doctor Hogan protested. “We can’t just leave them.”

“I’m sorry, but I can’t help them,” the alien said with a hint of sadness. “I wish I could help, but the leaders of my people would never allow their release. My people are convinced that they are spies from other worlds.”

Jada stared down the alien. “From other worlds. Apparently from another dimension. That much is true, but they...and we...are no spies. We’re explorers, scientists like yourself.”

Vor’Tenik forced himself a gratifying smile. “When they came, I recognized that they...and now you share a kindred spirit—the spirit of discovery—with me.”

“Then perhaps in the name of discovery you will help us,” Hogan said forcefully, positioning himself in a challenging stance before the alien.

Jada gently placed her hand on the doctor’s shoulder and spoke quietly to him. “Please stand down, Doctor. This man is not our enemy.”

“He’s not a friend either if he won’t help us get our people out,” Yoshi said. “At least give us transportation to the city so we can free our people.”

Vor’Tenik thought about the consequences of his inaction when the archeologists from the other dimension appeared. He tried, without success, to convince the security forces to not arrest the newcomers. But he had not been assertive enough...or so he thought. “I...have a vehicle that you can take to the city,” he finally said, trying to make peace with his conscience. “I don’t think that your going is a good idea. They will arrest you as well.”

“Only if we’re caught,” Yoshi said.

“Perhaps we should go back to our dimension and get reinforcements,” the doctor suggested.

“You may not have time for that, Doctor,” Vor’Tenik stated. “The dimensional generator has created an open door between the two dimensions, but it is not entirely stable. Part of my work is to try to stabilize the connection between the two worlds.”

Jada nodded to Yoshi and the doctor. "Then it's up to us to get our people and get us all home," she said. Turning back toward the alien, she smiled. "Thank you for the use of your vehicle, Vor'Tenik. We will back as quickly as we can."

"May your journey be a successful one."



"Despite Vor'Tenik's good wishes, I take it that you ran into some trouble," Blake said. "I don't see the archeology team."

Jada's eyes turned downward and she stared at the floor. "I failed, Sir."

"Jada." Blake's voice was sympathetic. "Tell me what happened."

Jada took a deep breath to settle herself. "We found the archaeologists and helped them escape. We made our way to the vehicle and started back for Vor'Tenik's lab, but there was a group of soldiers waiting on the road leading out of the city." Jada paused and looked at Yoshi. "Lieutenant Nakamara noticed that another group of soldiers had emerged from a nearby building with their weapons drawn."

"And what did you do, Yoshi?" Blake asked.

"I set my phaser on wide beam stun and waited for Commander Lightfoot's orders, Sir," Yoshi replied. "As soon as she gave the order, I fired. But the first group of soldiers rushed our vehicle and began to beat us with the butts of their weapons."

"We were able to fight our way out, but the archaeology team was recaptured in the process," Jada said. "Sir, I take full responsibility for my failure."

Blake placed a gentle hand on his first officer's shoulder. "Don't blame yourself, Jada," he said. "You did what you could."

"Commander," Jada said as she looked up into her CO's face. She wanted to cry, but would not allow herself to wallow in self-pity. "I want to go back with a full security force to get our people out of there."

Blake considered denying his first officer's request, judging the danger based on what he had heard and on the condition of the away team's uniforms. He also considered how Jada must feel at her failure and knew that another attempt to get the missing scientists back was necessary to her self-respect. "And I suppose you feel the same way as Commander Lightfoot?" Blake addressed the security chief.

"Absolutely, Skipper," Yoshi said.

"Now just a minute, Commander," Neil Hogan jumped in. "I think you should know that I consider another trip back to that other dimension an exercise in foolishness."

Blake smiled. "Your opinion is duly noted, Doc, but we were sent here to find out what happened to those scientists."

"And we found out, Commander," Hogan said curtly.

"I'm surprised at you, Doctor," Blake replied. "I thought you took an oath..."

“Yeah, I took an oath, Commander,” Hogan said, elevating his voice as he faced his CO. “And that oath includes preventing my patients going into harm’s way when it can be prevented.”

Blake remained silent for a moment, facing the doctor. “I understand your position, Doc, but risk is part of what we do,” he said. “Our orders to find out the status of the archeology team include their rescue if needed.”

Hogan straightened his posture. He still worried about those who would undertake the attempted rescue, but he could not argue against his CO’s position. And losing an argument with Blake Adams was what bothered Hogan more than anything. “Before they go back, I insist on treating these two for their injuries.”

Blake nodded but repressed his desire to gloat over besting Neil Hogan. “Of course, Doc,” he said. “How long will you need?”

“Give me thirty minutes,” Hogan replied.

“Very good,” Blake said. He turned to face Lieutenant Commander Lightfoot. “Plan on beaming down in...forty-five minutes.”

“Aye, Sir.”



The away team, consisting of Jada Lightfoot, Yoshi Nakamara, T’Les, and eight members of the *Providence* security contingent, materialized outside the demolished laboratory. Jada and T’Les both held tricorders to scan the area. “Power emanations are coming from inside this structure,” T’Les stated.

“It’s the dimensional generator,” Jada replied. “Vor’Tenik showed me how to activate it before we left him. He said that he would keep the doorway open on his side.”

“If we can trust him,” Yoshi interjected. “For all we know, Vor’Tenik informed the soldiers of our whereabouts.”

“I don’t think so, Lieutenant. My instincts say that he is an ally.” Jada opened the door and entered the structure, followed by T’Les and the other members of the away team. The first officer cautiously approached the alien device and reached toward the controls as Lieutenant Commander T’Les scanned the object with her tricorder.

Lieutenant Nakamara held his phaser at the ready position. “Be alert,” he told his security team.

“Energy levels are rising, Commander,” T’Les stated.

In a flash of light, the away team found themselves back in the other dimension, in the presence of the alien scientist.

Vor’Tenik stood in front of the away team. He quickly backed toward the computerized console that he had previously been working on. “Who...who are you?” His face expressed confusion and fear.

Jada glanced at her security chief and back toward the alien. “Doctor Vor’Tenik, we came back to bring our people home...just as we said we would.”

The alien shook his head quickly as he started to press harder against the console. “What are you talking about?”

“We came back to rescue our archeological team from the detention facility.” Jada Lightfoot slowly took a few steps toward the scientist.

“I have no idea what you are talking about,” the alien stated. “How do you know my name?”

Jada stopped advancing, seeing that Vor'Tenik's reaction was one of fear. “You told us your name when we were here before.” She immediately saw the alien's fear turn toward confusion.

“I have never seen you or your species before.” He started to let his guard down and took a couple of steps toward T'Les. You are different from the others.”

“I am Vulcan,” She said. “Lieutenant Commander T'Les.”

“And the rest of you are?”

“I'm Lieutenant Commander Jada Lightfoot, first officer of the Federation starship U.S.S. *Providence*.” She turned her head to one side, her eyebrows tightened. “I don't understand why you can't remember us.”

“Perhaps you met another me...in another dimension.”

“The dimensional generator,” Jada stated as she looked at the machine. “We must have crossed over into another reality.”

“Did you enter the right information into the machine, Commander?” Yoshi did not think that the XO would make a mistake entering the information, but the away team was not where they expected to be.

“I entered the exact coordinates that Vor'Tenik gave me.” Jada looked at the alien and then to the science officer. “Any theories?”

“The machine in our dimension may have malfunctioned or the other Vor'Tenik gave you the wrong information,” the Vulcan science officer stated in her typical matter-of-fact tone. “If the latter, we can only speculate if it was intentional or not.”

Yoshi stepped toward his superior officers. “So how do we find the right dimension?”

A bright light appeared behind the away team. The security guards and Yoshi drew their weapons and faced the alien that stood before them.

Jada stepped in front of the team and motioned for them to stand down. The person in front of her was identical to the alien scientist behind her. “Vor'Tenik. Do you know who I am?”

“Of course I do, Lieutenant Commander Jada Lightfoot.” He stepped toward the away team and looked at his doppelganger who stared back at him. “Yes, I am you, and you are me.”

The other Vor'Tenik blinked his eyes and shook his head as he tried to grasp what he was experiencing. “So, my theory about parallel dimensions is correct.”

“Perhaps that theory is correct, but the machine is not a dimensional generator as you...we thought. It is a time machine.”

“What?” Yoshi Nakamara blurted out. “So this isn’t a parallel world?”

“No, Lieutenant,” T’Les answered. “However, your arrival from the future and interaction with your former self may create some interesting complications.”

The future version of Vor’Tenik nodded. “I believe that I have worked out the solution so that my world’s history is not affected.”

Jada looked quizzically at the alien. “So how do we get back, and how do we rescue our archeological team?”

“I gave you coordinates to bring you to this moment in time, Lieutenant Commander, instead of back to when you were before. You see, your archeologists have not arrived yet, but they will appear soon. You can rescue them before my people’s security forces can capture them.”

“And your timeline will change,” Jada said.

“Only the next seventeen days...from my perspective.” Vor’Tenik approached his younger self. “Would you mind some advice from your future self?” He did not wait for a reply. “As soon as our guests are back where they belong, you should dismantle the machine to avoid the dangers that might come with it.”

“Dangers?” Vor’Tenik the younger asked perplexed about the necessity of abandoning years of research. “What dangers are involved?”

“Before coming here, I took a trip to the future and saw the decimation of our world, and there are no survivors.” He looked at Jada and Yoshi. “I even saw the two of you after you first arrived on my planet.”

Yoshi spoke up. “That explains the noises I heard and the feeling of being watched, but why didn’t your life signs show on our sensors?”

“I was wearing a stealth suit, so you could not see or detect me,” Vor’Tenik replied. He turned back to his slightly younger self. “When the rival governments of our world discover that they can travel back in time and change history, it will eventually lead to a global conflict. This machine is the cause of our annihilation within the next two years.”

“So if we destroy the machine, we will not destroy ourselves?”

“Once the timeline changes, we will not know what the future holds.”

The conversation was interrupted by another burst of light and the arrival of five Federation scientists, who were surprised by their sudden transportation to a restored alien lab and the presence of several members of Starfleet.

Jada approached the confused archeologists. “I’m Lieutenant Commander Lightfoot of the *U.S.S. Providence*. I’m sure that you have questions, but the answers will have to wait until we get to our ship.” Jada turned toward the two aliens. “We probably shouldn’t delay.”

The future Vor'Tenik nodded in agreement as he moved toward the time machine. "I am entering coordinates to return you to just moments after you left your time." He smiled at the humans, Vulcans, and Bolians. "I hope that my world is thriving with our people when you get there."

"So do I," Jada replied.

After the bright light engulfed the Federation officers and civilian scientists, they found themselves in the same lab that was still in ruin. The only difference was the machine was no longer operational. Several panels had been removed and cut wiring was scattered on the floor in front of the machine.

T'Les approached the XO. "Scans still show no humanoid or other intelligent life forms, Commander. It appears that Vor'Tenik was not successful."

"We may never know what happened, Lieutenant Commander," Jada said. "All I know is time is something that should not be played with."

"At least we got the archeology team back safe and sound," Lieutenant Nakamara said. "Should we try to go back and let Vor'Tenik know that his world is still in ruins?"

T'Les raised an eyebrow. "That would be a violation of the Temporal Prime Directive, Lieutenant."

"Lieutenant Commander T'Les is right," Lightfoot said. "Let's get back to the ship." She tapped her communication badge. "*Providence*, beam us up."

The End.