

STARDATE 58231.4

The U.S.S. *Trailblazer* sped toward Batir IV in the Omicron Ceti Sector. Captain Melanie Leeson had been tasked with transporting Federation Ambassador-at-Large Lirian Chen on a diplomatic mission, at the Batirian government's request, to formalize its petition to join the Federation. Batir IV had been a Federation ally for several years, and the government decided that it was time to seek a more permanent relationship with nearly two hundred other planets that had made the same decision throughout the past two centuries.

Leeson stood in front of the large transparent aluminum windows, watching the stars streak toward her. She spent most mornings looking out these windows before her regular duty shift on the bridge. The sight brought her inspiration and a sense of calmness that helped her find her center. The awesomeness of the infinite universe and all that it contained strengthened Melanie Leeson to fulfill her duty and life purpose—to explore, protect, and represent the ideals of the United Federation of Planets.

She turned and made her way to the replicator near the bar, which had no patrons this early in the day. “Black coffee, hot.” As soon as the cup of coffee materialized in the slot, Leeson retrieved it and lifted it to her lips, but let the steamy aroma enter her nostrils before taking the first sip. “Mmm, that’s good.”

“Mind if I join you?”

Leeson turned her head and saw Ambassador Chen approach. Leeson had heard the whoosh of the lounge doors as they opened and closed, but she did not bother to look up until the ambassador addressed her. “Not at all, Ambassador. Can I replicate something for you?”

“Orange juice, please,” Chen replied. “I’m not much of a coffee drinker in the mornings.”

Leeson had requested the ambassador’s drink of choice, retrieved it, and handed it to the newcomer. “What can I do for you?”

“A few minutes of your time, if you can spare them.”

“I’m not due on the bridge for another few minutes. Table or a seat at the bar?”

“Bar will be fine.”

The two women walked toward the bar, and each took a seat facing the other. Unlike the half-Betazoid ambassador, Melanie Leeson was no empath, but she could see by the look on Lirian Chen’s face that something was bothering her. “Lirian, what is it?”

The ambassador feigned a momentary smile, followed by creased eyebrows. “The Batirians provided detailed records about their history and technology as the Federation requested. I discovered that they have had interstellar space flight for centuries. When I pulled up images of their spacecraft, I noticed that the design has not changed much since they first started traveling to the stars.”

“Maybe they felt their ship designs were so efficient that they haven’t seen a need for improvements.”

“That might be true, but that isn’t what concerns me. I had the computer search for sightings of Batirian spacecraft or similar-looking vessels among the various Federation worlds for the past five hundred years,” Chen said. She took a deep breath before continuing. “Melanie, I found several matches, but the recorded sightings on one world were associated with some other disturbing accounts.”

Leeson’s curiosity had been piqued. “What world?”

The ambassador sighed heavily as she closed her eyes and slowly reopened them. Lirian Chen looked directly at Leeson. “Earth.”



To Boldly Go: The Batirian Mystery

A U.S.S. Trailblazer Story

By Cleve Johnson



Leeson and Lirian Chen entered the main conference room and made their way to the conference table where most of the Trailblazer’s senior officers, sans the operations manager and senior flight controller, were seated. The captain sat at the head of the table with the ambassador following Leeson’s lead and took the chair to her left.

Leeson folded her hands and leaned her elbows on the table, slowly moving her eyes around at each officer to make eye contact. “Thank you all for your promptness, especially since we did not have a scheduled meeting this morning. You are all familiar with Ambassador Chen. I am going to turn this briefing over to her.”

Chen nodded toward Leeson. “Thank you, Captain.” She looked around the table at each person, just as Leeson had previously done. “As you know, we are on our way to Batir IV to meet with the planetary government. The Batirians have been Federation allies for some time and have now requested to become formal members. It’s my task to evaluate their petition, explain the benefits and responsibilities of Federation membership, and make a recommendation to the Federation Council for or against the petition.” The ambassador paused momentarily as she considered her next words. “As part of the process, the Batirian government has provided me with their historical, societal, technological, and other records to help me understand them and their planet. I have discovered that they have visited Earth multiple times prior to first contact with the Vulcans. In the mid-Twentieth through the early Twenty-first centuries, Batirians sent several expeditions to study humans. The Batirian records do not include how in-depth their studies went, but I cross-referenced Earth records from that time and found many cases concerning what was termed UFO sightings.”

“As I recall, many of these cases were considered by government agencies in several nation-states as either explainable phenomena or hoaxes,” Lieutenant Commander Nora Jaeger, the senior science officer, stated.

Chen nodded her head quickly in agreement. “Yes, that was the official position for decades; however, some cases were never explained away and were deemed inconclusive.”

“Or covered up,” Lieutenant Commander Victor Jacobs interjected.

“Melanie Leeson smiled. “You always were a little suspicious about such things.”

“It’s in my nature to be at least a little suspicious, Mel. That’s why I’m a good security officer.”

“Mister, Jacobs, the diplomatic corps has designated me as mission commander, but I would like you to put your nature to work and be at my side on the away team.”

“I’m honored, Ambassador, but the XO should have that position.”

“Vic, Commander Shrev will be in charge of the away team,” Leeson said. “I agree with Ambassador Chen. You should act as her right hand on this mission.”

“If that is your will, I’ll do it,” Jacobs replied. “Then Ensign Laarex will head up security in my place for the team.”

Chen shifted in her chair and cleared her throat. “Back to the matter at hand, I am concerned about the Batirian expeditions to Earth because of some other incidents related to these *UFO* sightings. Several of the unexplained cases involved animal mutilations and human abductions. Some people claimed to be abducted by alien beings who performed a variety of invasive medical tests on them. The people were emotionally and psychologically scarred for the rest of their lives.”

“Post-traumatic stress cases can be extremely severe,” Lieutenant Ezred Eedo said. “I can only imagine how someone, who had no knowledge of life from other worlds, could be affected when a hostile extraterrestrial suddenly came and performed experiments on that person.”

“Is there evidence that the Batirians are a hostile species?” Commander Shrev, the Andorian first officer asked.

“Up until now, I have never had a reason to think that they were anything but benign,” the ambassador replied. “I still assume them to be friendly toward us unless they prove otherwise or unless irrefutable evidence comes to light. Right now, I just have a concern based on what I have uncovered.”

“So how do you find out if your suspicions are true or false?” Jaeger asked.

“I figured that I would ask them, Commander.”

“You are going to beam down and accuse them of performing animal mutilations and abducting humans for hideous experiments?”

“No, I am not going to accuse them of anything. I will be subtle in my questions.”

“How will you avoid offending them?” Eedo asked.

Chen gently smiled at the counselor. “I have been told that Batirians do not have emotions, so no offense should be felt; however, I plan to be diplomatic in my approach.”

“One thing is certain,” Leeson said. “The ambassador will not give a favorable report to the Federation Council if she discovers that the Batirians did perform abominable practices on humans...or other sentient species.” She looked around the room. “Earth wasn’t the only planet with intelligent life that the Batirians had visited back then. Their own historical data shows that.”

“We need to take the ambassador’s concerns seriously, but we need to keep an open mind about the Batirians,” Leeson said. “Remember that they willingly provided their records without reservation. They did not try to hide the fact that their people visited Earth and several other worlds that are now part of the Federation. The goal is not to accuse or judge but to solve the Batirian mystery of what they did or did *not* do during those visits.”

“I concur,” Ambassador Chen said. “I hope my concerns are unfounded and the truth will be uncovered.”

“And if it turns out that the Batirians did abduct humans and perform experiments on them?” Doctor Michael Keegan crossed his arms as he awaited an answer.

“We will cross that bridge when we get there,” Leeson said. “In the meantime, we need as much information as we can before arriving. Science officer, what do you have?”

Lieutenant Commander Nora Jaeger leaned forward and rested her arms on the conference table as she faced the captain. “Batir IV is a class L planet, rocky and mostly barren on the surface with little vegetation or water; however, underground water sources are abundant. Trace amounts of oxygen and argon exist in the atmosphere, but carbon dioxide is the primary element.”

“So, the Batirians breathe carbon dioxide?” Leeson asked.

“Yes, but they can spend several hours in our atmosphere,” Jaeger said. “I would suggest that the ambassador and her team meet the Batirians here instead of going down to the planet where it would be necessary to use breathing equipment.”

“The Batirians realized that we cannot survive in their atmosphere, and they have prepared special guest quarters and meeting rooms for our visit,” Chen said. “I don’t want to insult them by refusing their hospitality.”

“I thought you said they would not feel offended, Ambassador,” Lieutenant Commander Jacobs said.

“Without emotions, they should not feel offended, but I don’t want to take the risk that they might regard something as an offense through other means other than through emotions,” Chen responded.

Leeson nodded. “Agreed. Nora, please continue.”

Jaeger shifted in her chair slightly as she continued her briefing. “The last Federation ship to visit Batir ran detailed scans of the planet and detected no large structures on the surface, but several large underground caverns were detected with buildings. The ship’s sensors also picked up a planetary population of approximately seven million Batirians.” Jaeger paused and creased

her eyebrows. “There is no indication of any other animal lifeforms except for microbial and small insect species. For an advanced civilization to develop on a class L world devoid of other animal life is a statistical improbability.”

“Maybe they migrated there from another planet,” Doctor Keegan interjected.

“They achieved FTL about five hundred years ago, and all indications show that they have always inhabited Batir IV.” Carmen Petroni, the chief engineer, leaned forward. “Their technology is advanced now, but we have no evidence that they originated in another star system.”

“Another mystery for a later discussion,” Leeson said. “Carmen, what can you tell us about their tech?”

“We don’t know too much about power sources, but their spacecraft doesn’t use what we call warp drive. They use some form of magnetic propulsion system that allows them to maneuver through an atmosphere, normal space, and subspace without any visible exhaust. I would love to get a look at one of their ship’s engine rooms.”

“Maybe they’ll give you a tour,” Chen said. “If they want to join the Federation, technological sharing is a requirement.”

Leeson looked to the chief medical officer. “Doctor Keegan, what can you offer?”

Keegan gave a jovial look to Captain Leeson and Ambassador Chen. “Well, they are quite resilient physiologically. They have indicated that major diseases do not exist on their planet—nothing worse than our common cold. Physically, their average height is about 1.5 meters. Their skin is bronze with a green hue. Their eyes are almost cat-like but rather large. They have antennae on their heads, but we do not know what purpose they serve.”

Ezred Eedo spoke up. “Perhaps they are telepathic.”

“The inclusion of antennae does not automatically indicate a form of telepathy,” Commander Shrev, an Andorian, stated with a hint of offense in his voice.

“That’s true, Commander, but it is a possibility,” Eedo replied.

Keegan cleared his throat to let the XO and the ship’s counselor see that he still had the floor. “I will be sure to request full disclosure of their biological and medical source material. To avoid any misunderstandings when addressing a Batirian, be aware that both males and females look alike except for one noticeable difference—males have what appears to be a gemstone embedded in their foreheads.”

“Thank you, Doctor,” Leeson said. Turning her attention to Eedo, whom she now addressed, said, “Counselor, what have you found out about their society?”

“As far as leadership, there is a planetary council, which has three high council members who preside over the rest. Usually one of the three acts as spokesperson, but we don’t know if that person has any authority over the other two. We assume that members of the council are chosen through a democratic process.” Eedo took a deep breath. “They have admitted that they

are curious about other worlds and sentient species, which is why they have traveled to other star systems. They seem to excel in xenoanthropological science. Other than that, we don't have much information."

Leeson stood up to indicate the meeting was ending. "We will arrive at Batir IV by 0930 tomorrow. Commander Shrev, please work with the ambassador to determine the other members of the away team."

"Yes, Captain," the Andorian replied.

Leeson turned, and followed by Ambassador Chen and the senior officers, moved toward the exit.



The U.S.S. *Trailblazer* entered orbit around Batir IV as light from the star reflected off the starship's hull.

Within minutes, the away team, consisting of Ambassador Lirian Chen, Commander Shrev, Lieutenant Commanders Victor Jacobs and Carmen Petroni, Lieutenant Ezred Eedo, Lieutenant J.G. T'Shana, the ship's exobiologist, and Ensign Laarex, Petty Officer Logan James, Crewmen Jayna Goodlowe and Rez Revis all from security, materialized on the planet's surface. Each wore a breathing mask with a filtering device attached. Each one also wore goggles to protect from sand and dust swirling in the wind. Batir IV was subject to occasional windstorms, but even when the winds were mild, gusts averaged more than thirty kilometers per hour.

T'Shana was the first to open her tricorder to start scanning the area. A Batirian delegation was supposed to meet the away team at the current coordinates, but there was no sign of them.

Petroni also opened a tricorder, and she scanned for more than life signs. "Energy readings detected forty-seven point two meters in..." she pointed northwest of the away team's position and continued to say, "...that direction."

Commander Shrev tilted his head and squinted his eyes to see through the dust clouds. He was able to make out a manufactured metallic structure. "This way." He led the away team toward the structure, and the members of the team all noticed that a metal door swung open. All three of the enlisted security team members drew their phasers, but Ensign Laarex, the Denobulan security officer in charge motioned for them to lower their weapons. Both Commander Shrev and Lieutenant Commander Jacobs made a mental note of the ensign's quick reflex to take control of the security team.

Shrev and the others stopped their approach and waited as a lone Batirian exited the structure.

The alien neither smiled nor frowned. He had a neutral facial expression as he approached. He, or she, wore a flexible plastiform suit with metallic plates covering the chest, shoulders, and legs. Sensors and control mechanisms were built into metal arm bracers. The Batirian touched a control on one of the bracers and started speaking. The native language was

instantly translated into Federation Standard. “On behalf of the planetary council, I welcome you to Batir IV. I apologize for my tardiness in greeting you and for the necessity of your transport to the surface. Our capital city lies too far below the planet’s surface, making standard Federation transporters ineffective and unsafe.”

“No apologies are necessary,” the ambassador said politely. “I am Ambassador Lirian Chen representing the United Federation of Planets, and these are crew members of the United Starship *Trailblazer*.”

The Batirian looked into the eyes of each person. “You may refer to me as Zeevan. I am the first assistant to The Three,” the Batirian said. “If you will come with me, quarters have been prepared for you all on level ninety-two.” Zeevan turned and re-entered the structure, which was a single room. Shrev nodded to Chen and the others to follow, and they all passed through the open door. After the door automatically closed behind them, a bright light flashed, and everything went dark for not more than a second before normal lighting returned. The door opened and Zeevan led the away team out of the room into a hexagon-shaped corridor.

“You no longer need your breathing devices while on this level. I will show you your quarters, and the room at the end of the corridor has been prepared for your meeting with The Three.” The Batirian turned and started to walk through the corridor.

“Thank you, Zeevan,” Chen replied. “If I may ask, when will we meet with...The Three?”

“I have not yet been informed; however, I will inquire. The Three want you to be made comfortable before engaging in the work ahead,” Zeevan said.

“On behalf of the others and myself, I appreciate your hospitality,” Chen said.

Zeevan stopped and pointed to each of the doors on each side of the corridor, indicating the location of where the Ambassador and the *Trailblazer* crew would be staying. “All the rooms are identical, so each of you is free to choose where to stay. I hope that they will be adequate for your comfort. If you have any needs, the communication panel on the wall is available by placing your hand on it; someone will reply within moments.”

Ambassador Chen smiled. “Again, I want to thank you for your hospitality, and I look forward to meeting The Three.”

“It is my duty to serve,” Zeevan said. He turned and walked back to the other end of the corridor where he vanished in a flash of light.

Victor Jacobs faced the ambassador. “Any idea how long we have to wait for this meeting, Ambassador?”

“I wasn’t given an itinerary, Commander, but I suspect that they won’t make us wait too long.”

“Since we don’t know for sure, we should probably get some rest while we can,” Jacobs said.

“Agreed, Ambassador,” Shrev added.

“I’ll take the point,” Laarex said. “Crewman Goodlowe, you take position outside the ambassador’s room.”

“I don’t think that is necessary, Ensign,” Chens said.

“Ambassador, it’s regulation,” Jacobs said. “Even if it’s not necessary for your safety, there’s the esprit de corps to think of. Security personnel also serve a ceremonial function.” He smiled at the ambassador.

She pretended to act like it was an inconvenience, but her eyes betrayed her, and she nodded. “Very well, Mister Jacobs. I relent.” Chen smiled and walked toward the door nearest the designated meeting room.



“Captain, a ship is coming up from the planet.” Lieutenant Commander Beverly McFadden, sitting at the CONN station pointed toward the image on the viewscreen. “Wow, she’s fast!”

“I’ve never seen any type of ship move through an atmosphere that quickly,” Lieutenant Heron Jaxx, the Bolian OPS officer said. “It’s...impossible.”

“Evidently not, Mister Jaxx.” Captain Melanie Leeson stood and took several steps toward the center of the bridge as she walked down the stairs from the command level. “Nora, what do sensors show?”

“Very little, Captain,” the science officer replied. “Our sensors detect the outer hull and a magnetic field around it, but I can’t get any readings of the interior of the ship.”

“The ship has entered orbit with us, Captain,” McFadden said. “It is less than twelve kilometers in front of us.”

“Shall I raise shields, Captain?” Ensign Connor Bell asked from the tactical station.

Leeson focused on the saucer-shaped ship. It had no visible propulsion exhaust vents or weapons ports. No windows either. “I don’t think that will be necessary, Ensign. Remember, the Batirians are Federation allies. Open hailing frequencies.”

“Hailing frequencies open,” Lieutenant Jaxx said.

“Batirian vessel, this is Captain Melanie Leeson in command of the Federation starship U.S.S. *Trailblazer*. How may we assist you?”

The image on the main viewer changed. The alien ship’s exterior was replaced by the interior of what Leeson thought was the control room. There were two aliens in the background, apparently manning their stations, and in the foreground facing Leeson was another whom Leeson assumed was the commanding officer. Leeson noticed that her counterpart was female as she did not see a gemlike protrusion on the Batirian’s forehead.

“I am Wabek. The planetary council has sent me to see to your needs.”

“Thank you, but we have no needs at the present time.” Leeson quickly realized that the Batirian might have been showing hospitality, and she might have offended her by not accepting. Then again, the Batirian had no emotions. She decided to show a little hospitality of her own. “I would be honored if you would join me on the *Trailblazer* for a brief tour and...some knowledge sharing.”

“Yes, Captain Leeson,” Wabek replied. I have the council’s permission to share knowledge about our people with you. May I bring other members of my crew?”

“Absolutely,” Leeson replied. “We can transport you and your crew at your convenience; however, you will need to provide coordinates since our sensors cannot detect the interior of your ship.”

“Your transportation device will not penetrate our ship’s hull. We will use our own device.”

Leeson nodded. “Very well, I look forward to...” Leeson was interrupted by the sudden appearance of three Batirians standing in front of her. She tried to hide any sign of shock or amazement with the sudden entrance. “...meeting you.” Leeson was not sure of the Batirian customs or greetings, so she paused a moment before reaching out her hand. Before she could, Wabek thrust her hand forward, to which Leeson responded in kind. “Welcome aboard, Captain Wabek.”

“Thank you, Captain Leeson,” the alien said. “Please refer to me as Wabek. We do not use titles as many other species do except for those on the planetary council.”

Leeson was ready to apologize, but she decided that ignorance did not necessarily need an apology. Instead, Leeson said, “Thank you for educating me. I and my crew look forward to learning about your people and customs.”

“We also look forward to learning about yours.”

Leeson took note of Wabek’s words. It could have been just the way the universal translator interpreted the Batirian language, or maybe the implied emphasis on learning about the customs of humans and other members of the Federation had a hidden message. She decided that was just her imagination.

Wabek turned her head slightly to the right to indicate one of the two other Batirians that had materialized with Wabek. “This is Frinir, and this...,” she turned her head to her left, “...is Tolen.”

“A pleasure to meet you all. Leeson motioned toward Lieutenant Commander Nora Jaeger, who swiveled her chair around so that she could face the Batirian delegation. “My science officer, Lieutenant Commander Nora Jaeger, and Lieutenant Heron Jaxx, the ship’s senior operations officer.”

Jaxx, hearing his name, turned toward Wabek and her companions and nodded. He noticed that, in addition to Wabek, the one named Frinir was female, but Tolen had what looked like a gemstone embedded in the forehead indicating that he was male.

“I am prepared to offer you a tour of the ship and make the Federation cultural and historical databases available,” Leeson said. “How would you like to proceed?”

Wabek looked to the right and to the left at each of the other two from her ship before facing Leeson again. “With your permission, Tolen would like to learn about your medical techniques. Frinir is curious about Earth’s development since making first contact with the Vulcans.”

“That can be arranged,” Leeson said as she turned her head toward the OPS station. “Mister Jaxx, please have Doctor Keegan and Lieutenant Spitz report to the bridge.”

“Aye, Captain,” Jaxx replied.

Leeson turned back to Wabek. “And what would you like to learn about?”

“I would like to learn about your ship’s propulsion and your hierarchy of leadership, which seems to be different from ours.”

“I will be glad to serve you in both endeavors, Wabek.”

“You are most gracious, Captain Leeson,” Wabek replied.

The sound of the turbolift doors opening gave cause for Leeson to turn to see who had entered the bridge. She watched as the doctor and the cartographer, who also served as the ship’s historian, stepped out of the turbolift. “Gentlemen, thank you for your promptness. I need your assistance with our guests.” Leeson introduced the officers to the three Batirian guests and explained the assignments to Doctor Keegan and Lieutenant Spitz. After each one led his assigned guest to the turbolift, Leeson led Wabek to her ready room as the first stop on the ship’s tour.



Ambassador Chen and Lieutenant Commander Jacobs sat on one side of an oval conference table across from the senior planetary council members, which were known as ‘The Three.’ The ambassador cocked her head to one side as she tried to understand the situation that the Batirian expeditions to 20th Century Earth. “So, you are saying that your people did not perform medical experiments on humans?”

“Our people did study human culture for many years, and we did capture some for biological and physiological study; however, we only used our instruments for non-invasive scans of our test subjects. We did not perform experiments on any of your people.”

“Please pardon this line of questioning, but my superiors will want to know the extent of your people’s previous visits to Earth and other worlds, especially those that are now Federation members.”

“We understand, Ambassador, and we take no offense to your questions,” The spokesperson said. “If our roles were reversed, we would have the same concerns as you do. We, like you, are explorers, and we have a sense of curiosity about other worlds and their inhabitants. We specialize in researching other sentient life forms.”

“I have uncovered recorded cases of invasive medical experiments and abductions by what appear to be extraterrestrials from Earth’s history,” Chen said. “I want to be able to inform my superiors without a doubt, that your people were not involved.”

“We admit that we did what you would consider abductions of humans, but again, we did not perform medical experiments beyond scanning and recording the physiology and mental capacity to help us understand your species. After scanning humans, we erased all knowledge of each encounter before returning them.” The spokesperson, who sat in between the other two members council members, looked at one and then at the other. He faced the ambassador again and said, “One thing that we neglected to include in the records we provided to you is that travelers from other worlds visited your planets approximately the same times as our expeditions. Some of them were...less ethical than us.”

“What can you tell us about those other travelers to Earth?” Jacobs asked as his security officer’s instincts switched on. “What species? What did your people witness these others do?”

The spokesperson turned his bulbous head to face Trailblazer’s security chief. The Batirian felt hostility rising in the ambassador’s aide. “We do not know where they came from or what their species is called. We do know that their ships were similar in appearance to ours, and their mode of propulsion was almost identical, but we did not see their appearance for many years. We did discover that they had experimented on some of the lower lifeforms abundant on Earth at the time, and we witnessed the results after many of the animal carcasses had been left behind.”

“As far as you know, did your people witness any human abductions or experimentation by these other travelers?” Chen asked.

“We observed several abductions but did not know the extent of their experiments until the last part of Earth’s 20th Century. We, as you say, caught them in the act of abducting and performing unspeakable acts upon them. They also surgically inserted small devices in some of those they abducted for purposes unknown to us.”

“Once you witnessed the human abductions, did you see what the aliens looked like?”

“Yes, but we had not encountered them before.”

“Can you describe them?”

“They appeared to be thin and tall, approximately one point eight meters, and their eyes were large and black. Their skin was gray, and they appeared to lack clothing...unless what we perceived as skin was a biomechanical suit.”

“What did your people do, if anything, to intervene when they discovered what the other aliens were doing to humans?” Victor Jacobs felt his face growing warm but tried to calm himself when he noticed the look the ambassador gave him. He still intended to hold his ground until he got an answer.

The spokesperson observed the security chief non-passionately. “We confronted the aliens in orbit of Earth, and we convinced them that they needed to stop their actions and leave the star system.”

“How did you convince them?”

“We showed our superiority. And we left a group of our ships to patrol Earth’s star system to protect the people,” the spokesperson stated. “Our people looked after yours for many decades until Vulcans came to Earth and made themselves known to the humans. We remained hidden from both peoples and did not leave until we knew that Earth become a protectorate of Vulcan.”

Ambassador Chen considered what she had heard and realized that her empathic senses were uncertain that the spokesperson of ‘The Three’ had been truthful. She knew that they would respond just as the Vulcans would. The difference between Vulcans and Batirians was that Vulcans suppressed their emotions whereas Batirians had none; therefore, Lirian could not sense what wasn’t there. She opted to keep her face neutral. “Thank you for providing the information I requested. With your permission, I would like to take some time to confer with my colleague. When may we resume our discussion?”

“Would two of your hours be convenient?”

“Yes, thank you.” Lirian Chen and Victor Jacobs stood and nodded. “In two hours.” Both turned and made their way to the room’s exit.



Lirian started to enter her quarters. As she walked in, she turned her head. “Mister Jacobs, please join me.”

Victor followed the ambassador into the room and waited for the door to close behind him. He immediately started inspecting the room, looking closely at the lights, under the bunk, and opening drawers.”

“What are you doing?”

“Checking for listening devices, Ambassador.”

Lirian crossed her arms while projecting an incredulous look. “You’re kidding, right?”

“I never would have considered it, but I’m getting this vibe from you that you are not too certain about the story we were just told.”

“Are you part Betazoid, too?” Lirian asked as she watched Jacobs continue to inspect the room.

“Nope, but I have been a Starfleet security officer for a long time, and when my gut tells me to check something out, I usually listen to it,” Jacobs said, smiling. “I didn’t have a problem with believing those people in there, but you’re sending a few signals that tell me that it’s better to be safe and look a little closer.” Satisfied, Victor Jacobs calmed himself and walked closer to Chen to stand in front of her. “I can’t find anything.”

“I sent signals, huh? I’m usually aware of how I am coming across to people.”

“You probably were unaware that you were doing it, but I pay very close attention to people’s body language,” Victor said matter-of-factly. “Again, I’ve been in security a long time.”

Lirian shrugged halfway as she leaned her head to one side. “Experience is the best teacher some say.”

“And what does your experience tell you about the Batirians?”

“I’m not sure, Commander,” Lirian said. “I want to believe them, and I don’t have any concrete reason not to. But…”

“But you rely on your empathic abilities in your line of work, and they can’t help you this time,” Jacobs said as he offered a friendly smile. “Am I right, Ambassador?”

Lirian returned the smile. “I suppose so.” She turned and walked a few steps away, stopped, and slowly turned around. “Mister Jacobs, tell me what you think about the explanation about their visits to Earth long ago.”

“It seems plausible,” Victor said. “I’m not getting a red alert back here.” He reached around and grabbed the back of his neck at the base of his head.

“Is that the feeling you get when something doesn’t seem right?”

“Yes, that’s the feeling, but like I said, I’m not getting it.”

“Well, that is a relief since my normal abilities aren’t currently able to tell me what I need to know about the Batirians, then I’m glad that I can rely on yours.”

“Glad I’m here to help,” Victor replied. “Is there anything else I can assist you with, Ambassador?”

“Not at the moment, Mister Jacobs.”

“Then I think I will check on Ensign Laarex and the others before taking some time to rest before the next round. You should get some rest, too.”

“Sounds like good advice.” Lirian left it at that as Victor left her room. Of course, she had no intention to follow that advice as she had more research to do on the Batirian culture before the next meeting.



Having completed a tour of engineering and returning to Leeson’s ready room, Wabek faced her Federation counterpart. “Thank you for the tour and for explaining your system of leadership, Captain Leeson,” Wabek said. “My colleagues also wish to express their gratitude.”

“You are most welcome, Wabek. I have learned from you about your people as well. I hope that we can continue to have further exchanges of mutual learning.”

“If Batir IV becomes a member of the Federation of Planets, then I am sure that we will have the opportunity to learn from one another.” Wabek’s eyelids lowered a couple of

centimeters, which would have had the same meaning as drawing her eyebrows together, or eyebrow ridges for that matter; however, she had neither. I do not wish to break the protocol set forth by The Three; however, I consider it my duty to ask if you are aware of the Gifar. Have you made contact with them?"

"The Nazar Alliance mentioned them. We have been warned to beware of the Gifar, but so far, we have not come across their path," Leeson said.

"The Nazar were correct to warn you about the Gifar. When I return to my ship, I will send you the location of Gifarin and the area of space the Gifar patrol, "Wabek said. "You would be wise to avoid them."

"Have you had dealings with them?" Leeson asked.

"Once, many years ago. The Gifar entered Nazar space when one of our expeditions visited to negotiate a trade agreement. When the Gifar showed hostile intentions, we intervened to protect the Nazar, and the Gifar quickly retreated."

"It's my understanding that your ships do not have weapons," Leeson said. "How did your people deal with the Gifar?"

"We do not have weapons; however, we used our magnetic field to deflect the Gifar weapons back upon their ships. The Gifar did not have a way of countering our tactics nor our use of our magnetic propulsion."

"On Earth, several forms of hand-to-hand combat have developed over the centuries that utilize self-defense techniques to turn an opponent's strength against him or her, Leeson said. "It sounds like that is what you can do with magnetic fields."

"Yes, that is the concept, Captain. We are peaceful, but on rare occasions, we have needed to defend ourselves and others against aggressive species."

"My chief engineer would love to see and understand your ships' mode of energy and propulsion. Unfortunately, she is part of the delegation that went down to your planet."

"She has been granted the opportunity to study our power systems and how we employ gravity fields to operate our ships."

Leeson cocked her head slightly to one side as she wondered how Wabek would know. The Batirian had been in Leeson's presence in the last few hours and had not contacted her planet or anyone. "She was hoping for that opportunity."

"Be assured that my planet's hospitality will satisfy your engineer and the others who joined your ambassador."

Leeson suspected that the Batirians might be telepathic as Counselor Eedo has speculated. Perhaps their antennae allowed them to communicate with each other mind to mind. She considered asking Wabek but thought the question might be too forward. She merely acknowledged the information provided by the alien.

"Perhaps you would like a tour of my ship?" Wabek asked.

“I would be honored,” Leeson replied. “I have a number of duties that I need to attend to first, but I will be available tomorrow.”

“I will make preparations for your arrival in twenty of your hours if that is acceptable.”

“Twenty hours.” Leeson nodded, and Wabek touched a control on her left arm bracer and immediately vanished.

Melanie Leeson was amazed at the Batirian version of a transporter and could not imagine the technology involved. She exited her ready room and entered the bridge. She made her way to the center and faced Lieutenant Commander Nora Jaeger, who had just stood up to exit the duty officer’s chair. Leeson smiled and asked, “Any news from the away team?”

“Mister Shrev reported in twenty minutes ago. He and Lieutenant Commander Petroni were given a tour of the Batirian main energy and spacecraft manufacturing facilities. Ambassador Chen and Mister Jacobs are currently in their second meeting with the leaders of the planetary council. Lieutenant Laarex is enjoying leading the security team and staying near the ambassador’s location.” Jaeger allowed herself a slight smile. “Denobulans seem enthusiastic over the littlest things, don’t they?”

Leeson returned the science officer’s smile. “Yes, they do, but I think I know how he feels. I remember when I was a junior security officer in charge of a team for the first time. So, Commander Shrev seems to think that things are going well?”

“That was the general sentiment, Captain.”

“Good,” Leeson said. “And thank you for watching the bridge on short notice.”

“Any time, Captain.”



Lirian walked through the cornfield, noticing the circular pattern of flattened stalks. She sensed the nearby presence of others. They were not Batirian; neither were they human.

She continued to walk through the field and turned her head when she heard a strange sound, the sound of buzzing insects. Her nostrils flared as a strange odor penetrated them, and she suddenly looked and saw the source of the putrid smell and sound of insects—a domesticated animal that humans referred to as...a cow. Lirian stopped momentarily as she studied the lifeless carcass. Its belly had been opened surgically to expose the internal organs, but she noticed that the animal’s heart and lungs had been removed. A pool of blood soaked into the earth.

Lirian walked around the beast and continued in the direction she had been moving, getting closer to the others that she sought to see. She came across another cow that was in a similar condition as the first that she had encountered. This one was missing its liver, stomach, and intestines as well as its head. Who decapitated the animal and removed most of its insides?

As Lirian continued walking, her skin started to feel a slight tingling sensation; it felt like the air was filled with electricity. She finally reached the edge of the field, and there was a dirt road where she had emerged, and as she looked, there it was—a saucer-shaped vessel hovering a

mere two meters above the ground. A hatch was open with floating steps descending from it. Not far away, she saw a tall, gray-skinned alien leading three humans toward the ship. The humans walked by their own power; however, the facial expressions appeared that they were catatonic, not moving according to their own will. They almost seemed unconscious, yet with their eyes open—lifeless eyes.

Lirian stopped and stared at the other alien, and then it saw her. It stepped away from the humans and began to run toward the ship. It ran up the steps, which dissolved and attached the opening of the ship, morphing to reform itself as a hatch that quickly blended with the rest of the hull and became seamless. The ship ascended quickly and was gone from Lirian's sight within seconds.

Lirian knew what she had to do. She had to transport back to her vessel and give chase to the other. She realized that these other visitors to this planet were interested in more than a benign scientific study of this world and its people.



Lirian Chen opened her eyes and stared at the spokesperson of The Three sitting across the table. She no longer had any doubt that what the aliens had told her the day before was true. It was not the Batirians that had performed heinous acts against humans, but it was the gray-skinned aliens. The Batirian request to formally join the Federation could move forward as Lirian was now convinced that they had not participated in bringing harm to the humans of Earth's past.

The ambassador smiled even though she knew that it would not be reciprocated. "Thank you for sharing your memory. If you still intend to be a part of the United Federation of Planets, I am ready to endorse your petition to The Federation Council."

"That is the wish of The Three and of the entire planetary council," the spokesperson said. "When the proper time to formalize our union with the Federation, we will travel to Earth to complete the process of membership."

Lirian nodded. "Either I or another representative will inform you when the time comes. I thank you for your time and hospitality."

"We live to serve," the spokesperson said. "You are welcome to stay on Batir IV as long as you wish to learn more about our planet and our people."

"I appreciate your offer; however, I need to make my report to Captain Leeson and then to the Federation Council before my next assignment."

"Perhaps you will have the opportunity to visit us."

"I'm sure I will. Thank you."

"May your journey go well and bring success to you."

Lirian stood and smiled again. She turned to face Victor Jacobs, who had been by her side during the last two days of negotiations. “Mister Jacobs? Shall we adjourn?”

Victor bowed his head slightly, and the two turned toward the exit. Once they left the conference room with the door closing behind them, Jacobs stopped and faced the ambassador. “I guess the question of the Batirians being telepathic has been answered.”

“Yes, but I suspect that they cannot read the minds of non-Batirians except for other species that also have telepathic minds.” Lirian paused as she thought about her heritage as a hybrid. She was raised on Earth, and she had not had extensive training with her mental abilities, but because she was half-Betazoid, the Batirian spokesperson was able to share with her the memory of what happened on Earth hundreds of years ago. “Another thing that I learned about our new friends is they have a long lifespan.”

“And how do you know that?”

“The spokesperson shared a memory from four hundred years ago, and it was *his* memory.”

“He’s aged well.”

Lirian started to laugh. She appreciated Victor’s humor. “Thank you for your help. When I write my report, I plan to mention how invaluable you were to this mission.”

“I didn’t do that much,” Victor replied.

“You did more than you know, Mister Jacobs.”

“I’m glad that I was useful.” He smiled. “Maybe you can tell Melanie that I need some extra time off.”

“I’ll do that, Mister Jacobs,” Lirian said. “As soon as we get back to the ship.”

“I appreciate it, Ambassador.”



Captain Melanie Leeson entered the ship’s lounge and approached the center table in front of the large windows. She smiled when Ambassador Chen looked up. “Mind if I join you?”

“Please, have a seat.”

“Victor tells me that it looks like the mission was a success. Congratulations.”

“Thank you, Captain. Mister Jacobs’ help was invaluable,” Lirian said. “And I promised him that I would recommend that you give him some time off.”

Melanie started laughing. “Well, I might let him sleep in a couple of hours tomorrow.”

“I heard that you had some visitors, too,” Lirian said. “Did you learn anything interesting?”

“The doctor had a productive visit with one of the Batirians, and he found out that they don’t have doctors, at least not like ours. It seems they don’t need them.”

“Near perfect health?”

“Something like that,” the captain said. “And Lieutenant Spitz was able to fill in Earth’s history since they last visited. He found out about some of their history, too.”

“Will you have the lieutenant and doctor submit reports for me to forward to the Federation Council? It will help my case to expedite Batir IV’s membership.”

“They have already submitted their reports, and I will be glad to forward them to you.”

“Thank you.”

“My pleasure,” Melanie replied. “I had the opportunity to see one of Batir’s ships. I got the full tour.”

“That is wonderful news. You should compare notes with Lieutenant Commander Petroni.”

“I meet with her in less than an hour.” The captain stood up and pushed the chair under the table. “What are your plans after we get back to *Gateway Alpha*?”

“I’m going to take Admiral Sjögren’s advice and finally take some time off before the next diplomatic mission.”

“That’s good to hear, Lirian. If anyone needs a vacation, it’s you.”

“Well, I don’t know about that, but thanks for saying so.”

Leeson smiled again. “I will be on the bridge if you need anything. We will leave orbit shortly.” Leeson turned and left the lounge.

Lirian Chen, grateful that the mission to Batir IV was a success, looked forward to time off, but she already found herself thinking about her next assignment.

The End