

# RETROZINE

Two Fandom  
Elders,  
One More Time!

Autumn, 2022 \* No. 6

**In This Issue:**

**Trouble Brewing: Episode 3, Trouble Spot**

By the Crew of the USS Trouble

**The Ghost House, Chapters 1-5**

By Fara Shimbo

**Another Drive System**

By N. C. Shapero and G. S. Cole

**Commentary by Germaine Swanson**

**And other cool Stuff!**



# RETROZINE 6

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Print and online layout © 2022, Retrozine

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Got questions?

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# In This Issue:

## **Editorial:**

### [Ramblings of an Achy Elder](#)

by Germaine Swanson \_\_\_\_\_ 4

## **Retrospective** (*Fan Fiction*):

### EPISODE 3: [Trouble Spot](#)

By the Crew \_\_\_\_\_ 28

## **Retroactive** (*Original Fiction*)

### [Another Drive System](#)

by N. C. Shapero and G. S. Cole \_\_\_\_\_ 7

### [The Ghost House, Chapters 1-5](#)

by Fara Shimbo \_\_\_\_\_ 13

### [The Accidental Lunatic](#)

By Marjorry Donatello \_\_\_\_\_ 40

## **Retroaction** (*Design and Construction*)

### [Making Trouble—Building the USS Trouble in 3D, Part 2](#)

by Fara Shimbo \_\_\_\_\_ 56

# Ramblings of an Achy Elder

By Germaine Swanson

The *Trouble*, Is it Canon? There have been so many departures from Star Trek Canon that there should be space in Universe for one more little 'ole starship and the intrigues and intricacies of the Federation of the time.

Consultation with the Master Oracle, *Wikipedia*, puts the time-period between the end of the "Lost Era" novels (2293) and the beginning of the "Next Generation" about 2364.

Technically, nothing major has been recorded by scribes of the period so it is a safe bet *Trouble* was there.

The **Star Trek canon** is the set of all [canonical](#) material in the [Star Trek](#) universe. The official *Star Trek* website defines canon as comprising [the television series](#) and [feature films](#) of the franchise.

---*The Oracle (Wikipedia)*

Or

"What Would Roddenberry Think!?"

As of this zine's release, there continue to be disputes among fans, fen, Trekkers and Trekkies over whether the new *Trek* offerings of *Picard*, *Star Trek Discovery*, *Star Trek Strange New Worlds* and *Star Trek Below Decks* are officially true to canon.

The opinions I have agreed with thus far are "some *Trek* is better than no *Trek*". The more iterations of *Trek* there are, the greater the topics to discuss and pick apart while sitting on the floor of some room imbibing in your beverage or whatever of choice at 2AM. What fun it is to stretch your mind discussing improbable aspects of a fictional universe.

(Do they still do that? Have intelligent conversations and analysis of *Star Trek*, I mean. No, I'm not counting Facebook groups, blogs, and podcasts.)

I miss those days of free-range imagination, pseudo- and real science, and creating things. I'm glad Cosplay is a thing now, lots of great costumes and imagination with super creative genre blending. Cool. Well, that was true at the last Comic Com I went to. Since we've had a couple of years trapped in the house, imagine how inspired. The costumes will be.

WWRT? (What would Roddenberry think?) Of the *Trouble*? Well, technically, the whole *Star Trek* franchise is about trouble and troubles. I think there is room.

End note,

The fan fiction within about the voyages of the *Trouble*, which launched in 2334, are a group effort. It has several mothers, reluctant fathers, and a few cats who collaborated on this screen play/novel hybrid. It is unified by Fara's magnificent illustrations.

Speaking of Fara: My sincerest thanks for all the hard work she put into this issue while the editor was AWOL. It wouldn't have existed without her.



Want to join us for Excitement, Adventure, and Really Wild Things? The *Trouble* can always use new blood! Take part in the main adventure, or go off on your own or with friends to make a unique story!

The U.S.S. *Trouble* is a new starship, dedicated to exploration and research. Our adventures take place between ToS and TNG. Our only weapons are sarcasm and guile. On the *Trouble*, you can be whatever you want, including (but of course not limited to) furry, grumpy, fat, old, bewildered, artificial, imaginary, or even a cat.

Contact us through the website or via [editor@retrozine.net](mailto:editor@retrozine.net)!

# Too Much Fun

By Fara Shimbo, sort of...

Those of you who've known me since we all walked to school uphill both ways in waist-deep snow, know that I used to be constantly drawing. I used to write fiction because I had drawn something cool and thought of a story to go with it.

Well, I still write, but alas, age has caught up with me and my drawing skills are packing up and leaving for greener pastures. Nevertheless, what with Blender and 3D Printing, I'm still producing art, and now I've found another way to do it.

There is a lot of kvetching, mutching, whining, whinging and downright hostility surrounding art created by AIs. Personally, I don't understand the problem. To me, it's just another tool. Remember, even the paintbrush was a new tool once, and humans being what they are I have no doubt some people considered it cheating.

For me it's not only a godsend but an enormous source of fun. I've just started using two AI systems: Midjourney (<https://www.midjourney.com>) and NightCafe (<https://nightcafe.com>). There are many others. The way these work are that you describe what you'd like a picture of, and the AI generates it, to the best of its current ability, from your description. You can then tweak to your heart's content.

So, throughout these pages are a bunch of pictures I did with these services. See if you can guess what I told the program I wanted!

Answers on page 61 ! Good luck!

# Another Drive System

By N. C. Shapero and G. S. Cole

Richard Charles Fox sauntered into the living room. As he entered, the vixen's scent hit him like a club. "What's wrong, Marjorie?"

"I've been working on something, and the answers aren't coming up the way I want them to."

Richard couldn't help chuckling. "That means you don't understand something," he said, settling into the couch. "Perhaps if you try to explain it to me?"

Marjorie Elizabeth looked over her mate, sighed. "Ok, you asked for it," she replied, as she patted the couch next to her. She waited until he had settled himself in, then wrapped her tail around his waist. She picked up the voice input mike, and keyed on the wall display. "Display notes, page 21, execute." The screen filled with equations.

"Ah, Marjorie, just what *are* all those..."

"Chicken-scratches?" Marjorie suggested.

"I can tell it's mathematics, but ... beyond that ..."

"OK, I sometimes forget that people aren't as well read in some fields as I am. Those are the equations that have to be solved each time we enter jump-space. It's an eleven-dimensional Riemannian manifold, for all intents and purposes. It's not an exact map, but ... it's close enough for government work."

Richard sighed. "I'm pretty well read on politics, history, and thanks to our co-spouse, I have a reasonable grasp of current law practices. But this? Sorry, I don't have enough math for this. Could you state the problem in simple English?"

"Based on our estimate of how to get around in jump-space, there *should* be an effective limit to the pseudo-velocity therein. The energy requirements go up the faster you try to move, and it's not linear. It shouldn't be practically possible to go more than about three hundred to four hundred light-year equivalents in an hour."

"Don't our ships top out at about sixty per hour?"

"That's as fast as any of our cap ships can go, yes. But the Phoenix interceptors can go up to seventy-five, for a few minutes, anyway. They burn through mercury so fast at that speed that they go bingo fuel and drop out of jump if they don't throttle back, fast."

"What's the problem?"

"Well, we know how fast the Auuri can go."

"Their in-system drive in normal space—their 'quantum drive' is effectively limited to half- $C$  and three-quarters- $C$ . So?"

“Actually, they’ve demonstrated seven-eighths and fifteen-sixteenths-C in bursts. But the fuel cost goes up even more dramatically after the first two steps on their ‘quantum drive’ than our sheaf-transition drives in jump-space.”

“I don’t see what the problem is. They have a different normal space drive that they use in conjunction with a gravitic drive that’s effectively identical to ours.”

“But in jump space, their fighters demonstrated pseudo-speeds in excess of twelve hundred light-years per hour.”

“Implying that they’ve got a different jump space drive.”

“But the energy costs in jump space shouldn’t depend upon the drive system used, they’re but only upon the structure of jump-space and the pseudo-velocity. The Aauri have similar power systems to ours—though they use osmium wire in place of mercury for fuel.”

“When the map doesn’t match the territory, Marjorie, the problem isn’t in the territory, it’s in the map.”

“That’s what’s been driving me nuts! We use these equations,” she waved one hand at the wall screen, “to do our navigation in jump-space. The map works perfectly for getting from point A to point B, and for calculating the energy cost in doing so along any particular path; choose a slightly different path, and the overall fuel costs change.”

“So, the Aauri found a lower-cost path to go faster?”

“If they did, they’d have to move along a different path—different coordinate path in jump space, and in the areas where we met them, they were *close* to us. I know, ‘close’ takes on weird meanings in jump-space. But it’s locally a metric space, so our intuition *should* still hold somewhat close to reality.”

“If the map doesn’t match the territory...”

“But it *does* match, everywhere else. That got me thinking about the Aauran in-system drive...”

“Hold on a moment. I thought...”

“I looked back, and in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a theoretical physicist, Miguel Alcubierre, whose paper, ‘The Warp Drive: Hyper-fast travel within general relativity’ in the journal *Classical and Quantum Gravity* of May 1994, caused something of a stir back then.”

“But the sheaf-transition drive, as I understand it, is based on entirely different principals. And depends upon the differences between the distance metric in jump space and the distance metric we use in ‘normal space’. And we didn’t get working units until *this* century, a good hundred ten years after this Alcubierre published, using entirely different principals and mathematics. Am I wrong?”

“No, you’re right, as far as you’ve gone. At the time, no one knew how ‘negative energy density’ could be created—or how negative mass would be possible, without some sort of incredibly exotic matter. That, in fact, was the major argument used against the practicality of his suggested warp drive.”

“Now I’m really not following you. What’s this got to do with your problem?”

“I went back and read his paper. After I translated all his notation into modern notation – a lot easier than doing the same thing for Misner and Thorne’s ‘Gravitation’...”



“When did you read that thing?”

“When I was getting my PhDBasic.”

“When was that? I thought you went straight from the Academy to flight school.”

“I got it before I went to the Academy. I defended my PhDAdvanced when I was 12, Richard, two years before I went to the Academy.”

“Ye Gods! What was your thesis on? When you were 12?”

Marjorie Elizabeth sighed. “You know that I was only fourteen when I went off to Colorado Springs. How do you think I got *in* to the Academy when I was that young?”

“I thought, like Nicholas, you were bright. And that you just whizzed through High school early.”

“I graduated from High School—by challenge—when I was seven. I got my BS when I was ten and it took two years for my PhDBasic only because UC Berkeley has a residence requirement, though I went through the program online. I defended my PhDAdvanced when I was fourteen; again, the residency requirement and I wasted a year trying to solve the prime factoring problem.”

“Ah...why don't you let more people know about these accomplishments?”

“Because they're not really relevant to what I do. I fly jets, and I train and command others. The math is important to the aerospace engineering, which is important to what I do. But the degrees don't matter. Unless and until I decide to take a teaching post or some such where the 'union card' is required. But all this is, again, somewhat irrelevant.”



“So why bring it up?”

“You started it, by asking the question, ‘when did you read that thing’. Getting *back* to my point, though, no one appears to have taken into account that Alcubierre’s ‘warp drive’ needs one thing only to really work.”

“Exotic matter, which we don’t know how to find or make, or even if it could exist,” Richard said.

“But the warp drive doesn’t actually *need* exotic matter.”

“But I thought you just said that it does?”

“That was what everyone thought at the time, but ... we can generate gravity waves. We can create both positive and negative gravity wells. That’s the basis for the jump-drive, the in-system drive, and the uncharged particle deflector shields that our warships use. We generate ‘negative gravity’ – repulsion – all the time, now. We ‘expand’ space-time every time we raise deflector shields.”

“But aren’t those omni-directional?”

“Because our engineers worked day and night to figure out how to take the negative gravity fields and produce a ‘flat space’ in the close neighborhood of the generators—including the ship—and which ‘stretches’ or ‘expands’ space in irregular fashion out to roughly forty clicks, so that the vast majority of photons will be deflected as they hit layered ripples in space-time.”

“So?”

“So, I tried to apply our current engineering capabilities – the ability to generate gravity waves and to both stretch and compress space-time to see what I could do to reproduce something like the Auran quantum-drive.”

“Sounds like you have an idea for another FTL drive. Isn’t that worthwhile?”

“But it doesn’t work.”

“Well, it was an idea – not all ideas ...”

“That’s not the problem. It doesn’t work the way the quantum drive does.”

“How so?”

“It’s not only an FTL drive, like the *Star Trek* warp drive, but it can ...”

“You watched *Star Trek*?”

“Yes, Richard,” Marjorie said, “I watched *Star Trek: Imperium* when I was at the Academy. As I was saying, though, the Alcubierre drive should be able to produce an analog of the impulse drive of *Star Trek*. You just have to not run as much power through the ceegees...”

“Then why haven’t we done it already? We’ve got ceegees.”

“No one thought to use the ceegees not to accelerate or decelerate the ship, but to simultaneously compress space-time in ‘front’ of the ship and expand space-time ‘behind’ the ship. You’d need two sets of ceegees; the ring design is a really good approach and one they thought of back in the 1990s.”

“What’s the problem, then? I’m sure that Fleet would love to improve our in-system drives.”

“But it still doesn’t explain *why* the Auuran quantum drive works, or how they get their supraluminal drive from it. The Alcubierre warp won’t go in steps; or rather, the steps will be so fine that there really isn’t a noticeable quantum jump. It’s the *Star Trek* impulse drive below light speed, and the cost is strictly linear: 0.01 c costs almost nothing, and it stays linear until you’re almost at light-speed. 0.99 c should cost only 99 times what 0.01 c costs in energy.”

“What’s the problem, then? You’ve discovered some-thing new!”

“But it wasn’t what I was looking for! I wanted to under-stand the why and how of the Auuran drive!”

“And so you invented—or rediscovered—something better. Isn’t that good!”

“TODS!” the vixen shrieked, and jumped over the back of the couch and launched herself out of the room like a plane on JATO assist.

*I will never understand vixens, not if I live to be a thousand years old*, Richard thought. Then he picked up his comlink and put in a call to his (and his family’s) patent firm. “Haji? Richard here. Can you send over one of your prosecution teams? Physics—space, not energy—with a very open mind. Marjorie’s come up with a hot breakthrough. Keyword to filter on: Alcubierre. Astronomical engineering and DMEC energy improvements possibly related.” He continued



to talk for another ten minutes, dumping into secure, third-party storage the concepts, questions, application potentials, and R&D (both engineering and commercial exploitation) that were racing through his head. When he'd finished, he keyed in a search for Marjorie; but only after setting a "heads-up" warning to the house about probable scheduling changes for the rest of the day, with blocks of time to be reserved for follow-ups for the next week and month, and invoking the 'breakthrough invention' daemon and protocol. Which he code-named "Double-A, ST, dot bomb." Because this is undoubtedly going to be somewhat explosive. Anything that could be used to engineer and shape rings around a planet, or possibly establish system-wide, star-driven and warp-based defenses and weapons, can reasonably be described that way.

A gravity-toroid focusing stellar output through a short-hop warp gate—an amiable and pulse-able focus—is probably something that the White Hats are going to want to put under a 'Governmental Security' classification, Richard thought.

*If Marjorie's idea is right we could take a fraction of the asteroid belt, strap on 'space drives', and have near-C interception missiles. Which with a programming and fuel density chance, could become C+ transmittable. Meaning an out-of-system 'dark space' depot, or any number of such, could be established for a 'protection by obscurity' defensive positioning. Pass this on to the Auuri and the two flavors of Altha'ani/Shidran-kas, and we've a galaxy-wide MAD doctrine expansion.*





# The Ghost House

by Fara Shimbo

## Chapter 1: The Weird Sister

“In case nobody’s ever told you this, but Philip, your sister is—”

“I know, I know,” said Philip Quiros, almost through clenched teeth. “She’s *not* weird, she just ... she just doesn’t talk, okay? And I don’t want to talk about it, okay? So let’s not.”

Jade Quiros could hear the two of them talking, very clearly, through her bedroom window. Her fourteen-year-old older brother was sitting on the porch, with Madeleine “Maddie” Jolie (a girl who was probably... eleven? Maybe twelve?) the only child of the couple from whom Jade’s parents were renting this rural cottage for the summer.

They often talked about her. Lots of people did.

Jade grabbed the ruff of her dog Shiro’s neck, and then two of them went downstairs. Every step creaked, each in its own key; it was an old house. Well, old relative to her. She was ten and the house was older than her parents, and older than her grandparents, who remembered when there was no internet! So, that made the house an *old* house.

Jade’s parents were talking in the kitchen, apparently also listening to the conversation outside while sipping coffee. “I really was hoping,” Paul, her father, said, “that now that we’re spending the summer where Philip could see the stars in all their glory, that my son would follow in my footsteps. But, alas and alack,” he went on, with a rueful smile on his voice, “I guess it’s not to be. So, back to my book I go! I’m going to get that thing finished this summer no matter what!” He kissed his wife, and left the room, his slippers “shh-shing” on the linoleum floor.

“And what about Jade?” Evelyn whispered, to herself, or so she thought. She brought herself up sharply when she heard Shiro’s claws clicking on the flooring. Jade herself made no sound when she walked, a talent she had carefully cultivated over the years.

Jade walked up to the table and pulled out a chair. Evelyn reached out and briefly touched Jade’s cheek. “Are you enjoying being away from the city, my love?” she said, her voice soft and genuinely sweet as, Jade thought, befitted a woman who was short, plump and always full of delicious smells, as she put a doughnut into Jade’s hand.



“Morning, kiddo,” said Jade’s father as he leaned around the doorway, on his way to his office, no doubt. Jade’s father Paul, solid, dependable and downright jolly, was a professor of astronomy. Jade’s mother Evelyn, was a pastry chef of considerable talent. Jade ate the doughnut eagerly, nodding her head and pulling her lips into what she thought was probably a smile. She gave a piece of the doughnut to Shiro, who was an enormous, fluffy, white dog whose paws smelled like popcorn.

She could tell her mother was paying close attention, and fidgeting in her seat. Even the legs of the chairs creaked a little, and the space to her right seemed a little more “open” somehow.

Evelyn took a doughnut from the plate they sat on, which sounded as if it rocked a little; and broke it in half, and handed half to her daughter. “It would make me really happy if you’d just say ‘thank you,’ she said, softly and almost as if she were sad.

Jade smiled again and leaned over to put her head on her mother’s shoulder.

There was an eruption, of sorts, outside. Evidently Philip had had enough of whatever line of questioning Maddie was engaged in. Jade ignored them; erupting in brief furies was her brother’s normal way of dealing with the world these days. And in this case, Jade understood, because Maddie could either be a calm, sensible, somewhat credulous sweetheart, or a teenager-eating monster, and she could switch between the two without missing a heartbeat. She liked Maddie. Maddie was fun.

Evelyn regarded her daughter. For what must have been the thousandth time, she said, “I don’t know what happened to you, Jade. Until you were three, you wouldn’t stop talking, and you spoke so well...”

Jade turned to listen outside, then turned back to her mother, and shrugged.

Evelyn was silent for a while. Moving into one of her wistful moods, Jade could almost smell it. She said, “The roses are so beautiful. So many colors! If only you could ... well, never mind, pet, I’ve got a catering order to finish.” She stood up, and began rooting through the cabinets.

Jade sighed. She knew her mother meant to say, “If only you could see them.” But Jade had never seen anything, anything at all.

She had no idea what all the fuss was about. She picked up her cane. Time to go out and explore.

## Chapter 2. A Piano? And Oh Yes: Bears.

When Jade got outside, she could tell Maddie was still there, in the garden where Jade’s parents were growing tomatoes. Maddie’s house always smelled of cigars, which her father Martin liked to smoke; so consequently, Maddie did as well. Holding onto Shiro’s fur, Jade encouraged (or so she thought) Shiro to go toward Maddie; although Shiro, who loved to collect people of all kinds, would certainly have gone that way anyway.

“Hi, Jade!” Maddie called out as Shiro nuzzled her hand. “Hello, Shiro, my darling pooch!” she said, snuggling the huge dog and absolutely making his day. Maddie sounded long and stringy, especially when talking to Shiro.

Jade, who herself was of a normal size for her age and perhaps a bit on the pudgy side, smiled and waved, and sat in the grass.

“What are you up to today?” Maddie asked.

Jade shrugged, looked around, and tapped her head. Then she reached out with both arms and moved her bent fingers up and down, and waved a foot, back, forth, back, forth...

“Oh!” Maddie said, clapping her hands. “Music!”

Jade nodded, and there was that imitation smile again.

“What do you play? I play flute. You?”

Jade used one hand to point to the fingers of the other, which were curled and moved independently up and down, up and down.

“Piano?” Maddie guessed.

Jade nodded enthusiastically, then carried on pretending to play.

“You got a piano at home?” Maddie asked.

Jade almost made an “Mmm-hmmm” sound but seemed to think better of it. Then she pointed to Maddie, and in the direction of Maddie’s house, and made the fingering motions again.



Maddie had to think about this. “I wish you’d learn sign language,” she huffed.

Jade snorted and shook her head decisively.

“Well, fine, then. You asking me ...” She gave the matter a little more thought. “You asking me if I play piano too?”

Jade shook “no.”

“You... asking me if I have a piano?”

Now, again, Jade nodded, and diddled her finders some more.

“No. No piano. Not allowed even to play my flute in the house. My mom says it sounds like a dying pig trying to sing *Stairway to Heaven*.”

Jade hung her head, and hugged Shiro, who was sitting next to her, guarding her from squirrels, rabbits and her brother.

Maddie considered. “Okay, but ... you keep a secret, right?”

Every now and then, Maddie got a subtly excited, conspiratorial, eager tone to her voice. She was overflowing with it now, Jade could tell.

“Just so happens,” Maddie said in a very unnecessary whisper, “I know where a piano’s at! Except only, I’m not allowed to go there. But who cares! I still go there.”

Jade thought about this. Maddie was always full of great schemes, and, after only a week in the country, Jade herself was utterly bored. She leaned toward Maddie, and pointed around, and shrugged.

Maddie stood up, and Jade was sure from the way her skirt swished that she was looking around. She sat down again. “Well! There’s my



grandmother's old house. Got a piano in it. The house, though, it's in the woods. I'm not allowed in the woods because Dad says there's bears in the woods."

Jade huffed, and patted Shiro. Shiro, surely, would consider the largest bear just another squirrel. Shiro's breed was defined in the books she'd heard as "having a head like a bear," and he was certainly an enormous dog.

Maddie looked at her watch. "Okay, we've got time." Maddie's voice was now full of positive glee. "Come on. We'll go. I'll go tell your mom that you're coming to my house for, uhm... hmmm... okay, we're playing outside on my swing set, then I'll tell my mom ... that we're playing outside at your house. Don't know the way to the old chateau from here. But we have time, I can show you where it is."

Maddie stood up and shook all over; Jade could hear her clothes and long hair flapping. "This is gonna be SO fun!" She took Jade's hand, and pulled her up, and off they went.

\* \* \*

The Quiros family's cottage was next to a gravel road, in a clearing, just as the Jolies' was. Both houses and clearings were surrounded on three sides by dense forest, and while the Jade and Philip had never been warned about bears, they had been told to avoid the woods cause of poison ivy, which grew there in abundance. Nevertheless, Paul was known often to wander some way into the woods, and, Jade was sure, he had never been eaten by a bear, nor had he ever gotten poison ivy, so far as Jade knew—not that he'd ever admit it.

Maddie had put Jade's hand on the back of her belt, and they walked in single file. Shiro led them, stopping to sniff at everything along the way, and occasionally giving small barks, which, Jade felt, he did to let her know he was there, guarding her as always. So long as he was there, she need fear nothing.

And indeed, there were so many new smells! At the entry to the woods was a giant catnip shrub, bristling with bees. Wild grapes grew there too, and the leaves had their their own particular scent. Wild honeysuckle grew as well. Occasionally, Maddie would stop them, and pluck something, hold it under Jade's nose and invite her to "Smell this! Isn't it wonderful?"

Sometimes it was wonderful, and after sniffing it, Jade could pick out faint wisps of that smell all along the trail, assuming there was a trail. The ground was hard, but covered in sticks, last-year's fallen leaves, and small, struggling plants.

And the sounds! Birds she had never heard before, some which sang, some which screeched, some which chirped or made odd, clapping noises. Things scuttling across branches, or through undergrowth. Wind through the leaves on the trees; remarkable how much they sounded like the cars which passed on the road in front of her house. Woodpeckers! A stream...

At one point, Maddie stopped them and said, "I thought I just saw a mink!" Jade wasn't sure what a "mink" was, there was, just barely, a faint, musky smell. Or maybe she imagined it, recalling something she'd encountered online who-knew-when ago.

But most importantly of all, there were the "feels." Jade had mastered the art of telling how far away from a wall she was just by the feel of the air and the sound of her footsteps so long ago that she had no idea how she did it, and just took for granted that everyone did the same all the time. By a combination of what Terry Cunningham, her therapist, told her was feeling the "air pressure" around a thing and sound, especially clucking noises she made

with her tongue, she could tell where there were trees and posts, and she could tell wood and drywall from concrete and stone... much to the embarrassment of her brother, who was absolutely convinced that she was making it all up. Jade wanted to stop and smell everything, but Maddie kept pulling her arm, warning Jade not to let go of her belt.

After a while, the ground stopped feeling like forest floor and Jade could tell that there must once have been a road, or at least a walk, here. The ground was firm and much flatter than their trail so far had been. When Jade tapped it with her cane, she could hear the ring of something solid, like the old slates that made up some of the sidewalks in her city neighborhood.

Finally they seemed to come to a clearing, or at least a less-dense part of the woods. Jade could sense something large in front of her. Blocky and somewhat less than solid, and smelling of decayed wood, mold, and neglect.

Shiro started barking and rushing around. Somewhere a cat hissed.

“Beein’ v’NOO oh Sha-TOE Zhoe-Lee!” Maddie said. “You can let go now. See? No bears.”

Jade patted her stomach to call Shiro, and, holding onto the dog’s tail, she began to explore the house, rubbing her hands along it, and sometimes tapping. Old wood. Peeling paint. Distinct smells of cats and mold. A feeling of hollowness.

“Suh-see eh ... oh forget it,” Maddie said. “Grampa Jolie built this house. For his wife, Gramma Léonie. She’s a big deal in my family, you know. She was a spy in the French Resistance during the war.”

Jade kept walking around, one hand on the building, evidently trying to sort out its perimeter, and apparently not paying much attention to Maddie. Maddie, thinking there ought to be some kind of conversation, spoke on. “Almost got killed a couple of times, but she got away. She was good at escaping. Then after the war she and grandpa Jolie moved over here. Papa was born in this house, he says. Not even in a hospital, right here!”

Jade moved around the back of the house, paying careful attention when Shiro stopped moving, and checking for obstructions with her cane.

“Grampa and Gramma kept trying to teach me to speak French. I’m pretty terrible at it.”

Jade turned in her direction and shrugged. She had only ever heard snippets French, so she was no judge, really.

“After Gramma and Grampa died, Dad moved into the house we live in now, and married Mom, and now there’s me. You know, I asked him why he didn’t stay in this house and he just said he didn’t like it. Can you believe that? I can’t. I think it would be a great old house if somebody would just clean it up.”

By now Jade had completed her circuit of the outside, and stood by the front stairs. She turned to Maddie and diddled her fingers again.

“Oh! Right! Piano! Well, we can’t get in that way. The door’s boarded up. But there’s a window we can climb through. Come on.”

## Chapter 3: Château Jolie

Maddie led Jade and Shiro to the west side of the house, where a window had been relieved of its panes, and put Jade's hand on a ledge. Not on glass; the window had been boarded up with a piece of plywood which had seen better days. "Used to be nailed on," Maddie said. "I took the nails out. Can you climb up to there?" Maddie took Jade's hand and set it on the sill.

Jade nodded, and Maddie pulled the plywood away. "I'll skibble in first and then I can pull you up if you need it."

Jade could hear Maddie climbing, and then her feet hitting a floor that was more solid than she was expecting. "Okay! I'm in! You coming?"

When Jade grabbed the windowsill, Shiro began barking furiously. He grabbed her pant-leg and tried to pull her back down. Jade made a growling sound, and Shiro—very reluctantly—let go. Jade was able to climb in easily. When she was inside, Shiro began jumping at the window, whining and barking. Jade leaned out and growled again and shook her head. Shiro gave up the barking, but seemed to mutter to himself.

"Here's the kitchen," Maddie said.

Jade walked carefully around, touching everything and occasionally clucking. It was a much bigger kitchen than she was used to: fully three times the size of the kitchen in the Quiros' apartment back in the city. It sounded very empty, which may just have been because of its size; she would have to find out.

The floor seemed to be linoleum, probably over boards; she could hear them squeak as they rubbed together under her weight. There were wooden cabinets, very plain and with chipped, thick, glossy paint, and little round knobs for handles. The cabinets smelled of some kind of animal; probably mice. She found the sink; a huge, double sink, very deep, cast iron coated with enamel. There were holes where faucets should have been, but the faucets were no longer there.

There were three windows, and along an interior wall (she could tell because it was colder than the other walls) was a hutch or "china closet," similarly empty save for one broken cup.

And a cat, who wanted absolutely nothing to do with her, and ran away when she tried to touch it.

There was a chair, with a pillow tied to the seat. The pillow was still soft, but feeling it carefully Jade could tell that some of the stuffing had been removed from spots. Again, probably mice.

On a countertop along that inside wall, she found a wooden spoon. She picked it up, turned to Maddie and showed it to her. When Maddie did not appear to object to her having it, she decided it was now hers. She used it to tap things, determining their composition by the sound they made. It proved very useful for tapping things that were too high to make tapping them with her cane convenient.

Maddie called from a corner of the room. "Come and check this out!" she said, slapping her hand on something wooden.



Jade came and joined her, and Maddie patted the wooden thing again. Jade began feeling it. It was about her height, and stood on legs. It was solid, and the door, which opened forward, was lined with metal. Steel, from the sound. Inside, there were four compartments, two on top of two. The two on the left were also lined with steel, held in place with tacks. The top one had a hole in its floor. The bottom one held a much-dented metal pan. The two compartments on the left were plain wood, and there were grooves for shelves, though these were long gone.

“Know what this is?” Maddie said. “An ice-box! A real one! The ice goes in here, see—oh, sorry, I forgot.”

Jade really wished people would stop “forgetting” things like this and just talk to her as they would anyone else, but, as usual, she let it slide.

“Anyway, the Ice Man would come once a week or so. He’d put the ice in the top,” she banged a fist on the metal lining, “and then you put your food on the other side. The ice kept it cold. Well, cold-ish. It melted into the pan, and you emptied the pan when it got full. And you know what’s the coolest thing about it—when the power went out, the *ice still worked!* You didn’t have to throw out your food because it went bad. Isn’t that *great?! Such a brilliant idea!*”

There was that “I’m really getting into this now” tone in Maddie’s voice again. Jade grinned and nodded. It was, in fact, a very sensible invention, this “ice box.” She remembered her own grandmother saying, “Go get some milk out of the ice box,” meaning the refrigerator, when Jade herself was a child. Maybe she had one too...

“Piano!” Maddie shouted suddenly, her voice echoing in the empty house. “In here! Come on!”

The next room was also very large—by Jade’s standards—and also very empty, except for, in one corner, a grand piano!

Jade didn’t simply touch the piano; she caressed it. Its veneer was peeling in places. The ivory surfaces had come off of some of the keys, leaving a key that was low, and a bit rough, to the touch. But it was a piano, with a piano bench! And pedals and everything—and it was horribly out of tune. Some keys didn’t play at all.

But a piano is a piano, and Jade tried a few tunes on it. She decided to ignore the fact that many of the tones were somewhere between slightly-off and a dinosaur-trying-to-blow-bubbles. It was wonderful just to be able to play. Maddie listened for a little while, heard Shiro barking again, and went out to keep him company.

Jade sat at the piano, and played through many of her favorite melodies, mostly show-tunes. As she sat and played, delighting in the sound of the strings and hammers and the motion of her hands on the keys and her feet on the pedals, she could feel herself relaxing in a way she hadn’t yet, all summer.

*Bali Hai... Ten Minutes Ago... Surfer Girl... Somewhere...*

And then she felt ... something different.

*A presence?*

There was no one there.

She turned around and clicked, and tapped the floor with her cane.

Nothing soft in the room; she was quite alone.

But there was a presence.

Then, slowly, very briefly, there was something else. Something totally alien, something utterly unknown, something *wonderful*, something she had to have more of.

And then it was gone.

Slowly, the presence dissipated, vanished.

She wanted it, more of it, all of it. She wanted it to last, to become something. But it was gone now.

She didn’t know that what she had just experienced was called “light.”

Maddie came racing in, her footsteps harsh across the wooden floors. “It’s late! We have to go before they miss us! Come on! Hurry up!”

Jade got up and followed Maddie out. But she would be back.

Definitely.

## Chapter 4: It's Not Fair!

One thing Jade was really good at, was sneaking into and out of the house—or, in the city, the apartment—unnoticed. And one of the really good things about sneaking into the house unnoticed was that she never had to admit that she'd been gone in the first place.

Shiro, on the other hand, had never developed this skill. When he was younger, he would bound into the house with lots of barking and enthusiasm. Now he just wandered in, checked his food bowl, ate if there were food, and if not, went straight to sleep on the couch.

This time, Shiro began walking toward the kitchen, stopped abruptly, and turned to go upstairs to Jade's room.

The reason for this abrupt change of routine was obvious almost immediately. In the kitchen, big brother Philip was raging.

"Why can't I have a pet of my own?! Why does Jade always get everything she wants? She's not your only child! Give a damn about *me* for once!"

"Phil, we've told you before," his mother began.

"AND SO HAVE I!"

"That's enough!" growled Paul. "Go to your room, and stay there until further notice."

"You hate me, don't you?" Philip said as he stormed away.

Evelyn got up after him.

"Where are you going?" Paul asked.

"To turn off his wifi," Evelyn said.

Jade sat in her spot on the couch. Not in a cozy corner, or where the softest cushion was, but in just exactly the right spot where any parental conversations in the kitchen came in loudest and clearest.

Her mother came back and fell into her chair at the table. "He's not going to let this drop. Why does he even want a cat? He told me once he doesn't even like them!"

In Jade's eyes, this made Phil a Philistine of the worst sort.

Jade's father got up and got something from the fridge, and put it on the table. "I know, I know. I told him once that Shiro is a family dog; she doesn't belong to Jade. Shiro was already here when Jade was born."

A short silence, and sipping sounds.

“You know,” Evelyn said, and Jade could hear her turning in her chair, probably making sure she wasn’t being overheard, “I wish we hadn’t kept Shiro in the first place. He eats so *much!* It’s getting harder and harder to afford to feed him, what with the pandemic, and ... all the things going on, and the catering business has stalled and... Oh, Paul, I don’t know, I just don’t know.”

Paul patted his wife. “Well, it’s not going to be much longer, you know.”

Another short silence, and then Evelyn said, “Yes, and that’s going to be another enormous problem.”

“We could get a smaller dog,” Paul suggested. “You know, for when—”

Evelyn’s attention was elsewhere. “And who’s going to end up cleaning litter boxes? I mean, it’s hard enough getting customers when they find out there’s a dog in the house.”

“Speaking of dogs, have you seen Jade and Shiro this afternoon?”

Evelyn sighed. “They went to the Jolies’ house. I should call and tell them to come home.”

Jade could hear her mother rummaging for her phone. Best not to give her reason to talk to Mrs. Jolie and find out that she, Jade, had never been there anyway. Mrs. Jolie would probably say that Maddie had been at the Quiros’ house, and then there’d be real trouble. She got up and walked into the kitchen, waving as she walked to the fridge.

“Have a good time with Maddie, Jade?” her mother said.





“IT’S NOT FAIR!” boomed her big brother’s voice from upstairs. Her mother smirked. She had a strict policy that sentiments such as “it’s not fair!” are not to be abandoned after the age of five. Jade couldn’t help smirking as well. So far as she was concerned, he had never matured past the age of five anyway.

The age of five ... so much had happened then.

But even though it caused so much grief, Jade thought, she was glad Phil told her. Otherwise she would certainly have run out by now.

She got a carton of milk from the fridge and poured herself a glass, and then rummaged for dog biscuits for Shiro.

“Remember, just one at a time,” her mother said. “We don’t want him to get fat.”

Jade’s face took on a knowing, “Yeah, right” look. Evelyn was very glad that Jade couldn’t see the expression on her own.

\* \* \*

The next morning Jade woke up eager to go to the Sha-Toe again, but it was pouring with rain, and Maddie did not come to the house. Philip was speaking to no one, and when he passed Shiro, who was dutifully guarding Jade as usual, Shiro gave a small yelp; Jade though Philip must have stepped on him or pulled his tail or something. Someone would have to be done about that boy, she thought. He was always morose and unpleasant, but since his voice had dropped when he became a teenager, he’d become downright surly.

She found him on the porch, sitting in a presumably dry spot under the awning.

He looked at her and said, “Where’s Maddie? She’s usually here by now.”



The last time he had asked that, Jade had put her hands over her heart and fluttered her eyelashes, as if to say, “Girlfriend, eh?” but that had ended badly. But she didn’t this time. She was wondering the same thing. Maybe she should just walk over to her house and get her?

Jade began to wonder if she could find her way to the Sha-Toe by herself. She had been careful to memorize the route, but... probably not.

Or maybe Shiro remembered how to get there, or could follow a scent trail there.

Not in the rain, no; and he was a livestock-guarding dog, not a bloodhound.

Jade poked her brother, and, getting his attention, pointed to him, to herself, to the forest, and shrugged.

“What?” Phil snapped.

Jade went through the routine again, this time adding a walking-motion with her fingers after pointing to the woods.

“Oh for the love of Mike,” Phil snarled; he wanted to shout, but he knew his parents could hear him. “Why don’t you just say something already? I know you can! You’re just being stubborn! If you’ve got something to tell me, just tell me, why don’t you!”

Jade turned full-face toward him, raised her eyebrows, snorted, and got up and walked away. She always did this whenever he mentioned her silence, but not, he couldn’t help but have had noticed, when anyone else did.

He couldn’t imagine why, but somewhere, needling the back of his mind, was something...

No, she was just being stubborn, just to spite him.



## 5. An Introduction

Maddie didn't show up again for two days. "How come we didn't see you?" Phil said when she appeared.

Maddie became "all huffy." "How come you didn't come to my place? You know where it is. Or aren't we friends anymore?"

"What? I..." Philip stumbled for words. "Of course we're friends, it's just that the day before yesterday it was raining and yesterday, well..."

"You could have texted at least!" Maddie said dramatically.

Jade shook her head quickly, smiling.

Maddie noticed, and voice sparkled. "Oh, did you get in trouble for something?"

"Yeah," Philip said through his teeth. "For wanting someone to talk to for a change. And don't tell me I should have texted or talked to people online because it's not the same, so yeah, I got in trouble, now drop it."

Maddie sat down in the grass. "Well, I'm here now, what do you want to talk about?"

Philip turned and shook his head. "Nothing," he said, and began walking away.

"Fine!" Maddie called behind him, pouting.

Jade tugged at her sleeve, and pointed to the woods, making the walking-fingers sign again.

Maddie nodded quickly, and said, perhaps a little too loudly, "FINE! Me and Jade will play in my house again!"



“You can keep her!” Philip called as he entered the house.

“Come on, let’s go!” Maddie whispered. That merry, conspiratorial sparkle was back in her voice.

Even Shiro seemed eager to get going.

\* \* \*

The trip to the house seemed much shorter this time. Jade didn’t have to hold on to Maddie the entire way, and Shiro did seem to remember the route a bit.

Once in the house, Jade went straight for the piano. She sat at it, and waited for a bit, to see if she could feel that sense of presence again.

When nothing happened she began playing again. She had probably just imagined it... and then it was there again.

She stopped playing, but the “presence” stayed. It came toward her, and stopped beside her.

Shiro came up to the piano, and began sniffing eagerly.

Jade felt something ever-so-lightly touch her hand, pushing it toward the piano.

She began to play. She played the theme from *Jurassic Park*, one of her favorites.

The slow, stately melody was easy to get caught up in.

And there it was... that... was that light? In front of her?

She was seeing ... her fingers? Or piano keys? Blurry, and faint, and from beside her, not from her own head.

She turned to the side, and there was, very roughly, as if put together only from matchsticks and memories of touch...

‘That must be a face,’ she thought. Then she realized, ‘That must be MY face!’

Round cheeks, a short nose, big eyes. Short hair.

She reached up and touched her nose, and saw her hand.

And then, as if from across the room, a gentle voice said, “*Bienvenu, ma petite! Je m’appelle Léonie.*”

*And then it all went dark.*

**To Be Continued...**

## Admiral's Personal Log

2204.9

I am pondering a minor problem that is affecting my health. After discussing my symptoms with the ship's doctor (a good officer remembers the names and information about their crewmen. I have no idea who she is, or who anyone is. I have a superb memory but since our first full staff officers' meet and greet I have been strangely disoriented). The confusion, disorientation, and retreating into the self remind me of my first days at school off-world. Until they taught us self-control and how to use the Dampening Shields existing off world was like existing just before the eye-wall of a hurricane passes. The fiercest winds and chaos of an out-of-body or other body experience.

Dampening Shields are required when a large group of telepaths and mental communicators are assembled in one place. The resulting confusion leads to misunderstandings at the least and murder or war without precautions. My personal one was missing. I always wore it because I do a lot of work at the academy with untrained telepaths. It's a shiny little bauble that looks like jewelry, like an extremely expensive ear-cuff decorated with Vulcan runes. I have never lost one before. I wear the one I was given at elevation to First Rank. Mine is surprisingly simple, unlike the more modern ones; it suits my style: elegant, uncomplicated, and efficient.

That is how I normally am. Right now there is chaos in my mind. I can feel the mental impulses passing through the ship from deck and bulkhead into open space. It's like a beacon of wild and disordered energy. I felt the need to scream with every cell in my body, long and loud. It took a bit of sleuthing with the help of the doctor and Engineering to figure out that the ship, *The Trouble*, was not fitted with Hi-Tech telepathic shielding what so ever! Every single ship or event in the Federation had shielding as standard equipment. It is a requirement that first contact is part of a mission.

The Engineer explained that the Captain said it gave her migraines, so it was only used below deck where recruits and ensigns were assigned. The doctor did note that the number of cases of what appeared to be space-sickness increased down there after her inspections.

"I thought it was nerves," she said. "The kids are still awestruck to have been selected by Captain Shimbo. I noted the events and logged them."

"Go back and look at them again. I want to know why a ship full of telepaths and mental communicators can get along without special equipment or shielding." (And I can't she thought).

I returned to my quarters and met with T'Pril, my *Aide de Camp* about this dilemma I was facing. I needed to find or replace my shield and solve the mystery of how the senior crew functioned so seamlessly without technical assistance. We agreed she should order a shuttle and join me bringing with her a Shield for me and whatever else we would need to investigate how the ship held together with so much energy crashing through it.

We coordinated our chronometers. I let the bridge know to expect the shuttle. I am preparing myself to meet with Fa about this.



# Trouble Brewing

## Episode 4: Trouble Spot

FADE or something:

### 1 CORRIDOR OF THE TROUBLE

1

RUBA LACINCIA is being taken away by security to be put in the brig. ADMIRAL and CAPTAIN are walking down the hall, explaining the situation to SWANSON, who is nodding knowingly and taking names. CAPTAIN is, to put it mildly, furious, but doing her best to hold it in.

SWANSON

I hate to say I told you so, but-

CAPTAIN

(warningly)

Not in the mood...

(into com badge)

Dorcas, got any trace on any kind of signal out of the ship?

DORCAS

(over com badge)

Trace of a signal. No clue where, only small clues what.  
Working on it.

CAPTAIN

Roger that, carry on.

And there are absolutely no other ships in the area, unless someone's got a really exceptional cloaking device. Swanson, look through your records and see if you can come up with anything similar. In the meantime, I have to go talk to someone.

ADMIRAL

You're going to interrogate Ruba?

CAPTAIN

No, I think I may have a more productive conversation elsewhere.

FADE TO:

## 2 MUDD'S QUARTERS

2

MUDD is seated at his table, looking alternately at The Device and at a tablet, and occasionally mumbling notes. The door chimes, and MUDD rushes to grab The Device and secret it away, but CAPTAIN walks in anyway and sees it.

CAPTAIN

Whatcha got there, Uncle Harry?

CAPTAIN reaches out to grab it.

MUDD

Oh, now really. How did you get in here?

CAPTAIN

I'm the Captain. I have ways. Gimme.

MUDD

No! I protest!

CAPTAIN

(In a high-pitched, shrewish voice)

Harcourt Fenton Mudd! What have you been up to?

MUDD

(flustered)

Now really, that's not playing fair, is it?

CAPTAIN folds her arms across her chest and gives him the, "We made a deal, remember?" look.

MUDD

Oh, my dear favorite niece! It's nothing! I mean... And it's got britsa all over it and, and well, you never know! Honestly,

it may be dangerous to handle.

CAPTAIN

You're handling it.

MUDD

(stuttering)

Yes, but, you see, I'm not the Captain. Who's going to care if anything happens to me? But, you know, on the other hand, should anything happen to you-



CAPTAIN reaches out, grabs The Device, sets it on the table under the lamp, and wipes her hands on her pants. MUDD retakes his seat with theatrical exasperation. CAPTAIN grabs a chair and sits opposite, staring at The Device.

CAPTAIN

So... where'd this come from?

MUDD

Oh, that, it's ... something Moriarty picked up, oh-

CAPTAIN

Oh, so that's what Moriarty was doing going down to Beta Kerrotyn, then.

MUDD

How do you-I mean-

CAPTAIN

I saw the creature sneaking around the docking bay when we were all saying good-bye to the Thunderbird pilot.

MUDD

(realizing he's not going to get anywhere, as usual)  
All right, all right. You know how valuable "wild caught" britsa is. To connoisseurs, and the like. My resources being rather scarce of late, we thought it would be a good idea to go find some, you know, maybe find the source. Really, if you think about it, a few kilos could set us up for life.

CAPTAIN

Assuming it is wild.

MUDD

I beg your pardon?

CAPTAIN

Well, you said this had britsa on it. It may have had. It doesn't now. But it's new. And you have some britsa here, I see, and Moriarty went down to the planet's surface and now you have this thing, which is obviously not a natural thing, ergo: If this was brought to the planet, since there's nothing there that could possibly have made it, it came from elsewhere. Also, ergo: if there was britsa where this was found, chances are that both were brought to the planet. Moriarty found this and brought it back with the britsa. So. What is it?

MUDD

I don't know. And that is the honest truth, I assure you, I just don't know.

CAPTAIN

(to com badge)

Mirjin, you there?



MIRJIN

As ever.

CAPTAIN

Please run a thorough diagnostic of my current location starting from half an hour ago, and let me know if you find any kind of signal at all coming to or from here.

MIRJIN

Aye, Captain, on it.

CAPTAIN

Thanks. Out.

(Looks at her hands, wipes them on her pants again. Picks up  
The Device)

I'll just shuffle this off to quarantine. Pretend it's a Firebolt we need to check for curses, and you'll get it back when we're done. Toodle-pip!

MUDD

(calling after CAPTAIN as she walks out)  
Fine! But the britsa is mine!

CAPTAIN leaves.

MUDD looks almost murderous for a moment, then seems turns away, parroting "Harcourt Fenton Mudd..."

FADE TO:

### 3 CORRIDOR OUTSIDE MUDD'S QUARTERS

3

CAPTAIN is leaving Mudd's quarters as the door closes behind her, muttering imprecations in Italian that are probably best not actually heard. The comm badge beeps.

CAPTAIN

Yes?

DORCAS

(via comm badge)

Captain, signal from your location: nothing more. But signal very similar in Engineering. Brief, very brief. Second only. But similar.

CAPTAIN

Thanks, I'm on my way.

(Stops, glowers ahead)

No use trying to hide, Moriarty, I can hear you echo-locating.

MORIARTY's head appears around a ceiling conduit, looking somewhat astonished.

CAPTAIN walks out of shot, MORIARTY waits, jumps down, bolts into MUDD'S quarters.

FADE TO:

**4 INTERIOR, THE BRIG**

**4**

The brig is actually somewhat cozy. There is a Comfy Chair, a very tiny kitchenette and a very large coffee pot (and no synthesizers of any kind). There is a door to the loo and a large screen, but there are no windows. RUBA LACINCIA is there, pacing, vacillating between being scared senseless and furious.

DOORBELL

Ding dong, *Avon calling!*

LACINCIA

SHUT UP!

Captain enters, accompanied by Vinny.

CAPTAIN

We need to talk.

LACINCIA

(Turning on the CAPTAIN and getting way too close)

No. YOU need to talk. I need an explanation.

CAPTAIN

(getting even closer and staring LACINCIA straight in the eyes;

CAPTAIN is the slightly taller of the two.)

Fine. So do I. I'll trade you. Sit.

LACINCIA

I will not.

CAPTAIN

(turning around and beginning to leave)

Suit yourself. Vinny, you're with me.

CAPTAIN walks slowly toward the door in case LACINCIA changes her mind.

VINNY follows, wagging happily.

LACINCIA does not follow, and CAPTAIN et. al. leave.

LACINCIA does the Solitary Drama Queen bit, and finally sits down, pulls a tablet toward her, and begins to write.

FADE:

## 5 DORCAS' QUARTERS

5

DORCAS' quarters are long and without interior walls, but with plenty of plants, logs and stones. Her nest is high on a wall facing a window.

DOOR chimes

DORCAS

Come in.

CAPTAIN enters.

DORCAS

Skipper! How can help? What up?

CAPTAIN

Oy, Gilligan, I have had a day...

DORCAS

Be comfortable, Fa, I make tea.

DORCAS runs to one end of the large room. CAPTAIN sits on a bean bag chair against a bulkhead and rubs her temples. DORCAS returns with tea and donuts.

CAPTAIN

Thanks, Dee.

DORCAS

Tell about day.



CAPTAIN

Well, things all started to go wrong when my Level 53 Mage was hit with the Second Childhood curse...

DORCAS throws back her head and waves her tail and arms, her version of a laugh.

CAPTAIN

You heard about Chip.

DORCAS

Did! Distressing that.

CAPTAIN

Yup.

DORCAS

Ideas?

CAPTAIN

None at the moment. Well, none related to where Chip is, anyway. But I was talking to the Admiral. She says she's here to write a report on how bad and not-cost-effective it is to have a multi-species crew. I know Starfleet. There's got to be more to it than that.

DORCAS

And you wonder...

CAPTAIN

Lots of things. Like, did I just give her the ammunition she needs for that report? Or is the whole point to get me off the ship and out of Starfleet's hair? You know, they expect women my age to retire to nice cushy desk jobs and not make a fuss.

DORCAS

You and Admiral, friends, yes?

CAPTAIN

Oh yes, best buds from long ago. But she's under pressure and ... you know how that goes. So I need to find Chip, and find Chip right away, and figure this out-

DORCAS

That's what Captain has Crew for. Leave to Crew, they fix.

CAPTAIN

The crew are great-

Com badge chimes

CAPTAIN

Oh, what now? [taps com badge] What?

COM BADGE

You have been sent a Text Communication by Ruba Lacincia.

CAPTAIN pulls out a wallet-sized, folded tablet from a pocket and unfolds it, taps it a few times, and begins to read.

CAPTAIN

Oh, this is interesting.

DORCAS

May share?

CAPTAIN

Of course.

DORCAS sits next to CAPTAIN, who reads aloud

CAPTAIN (reading)

"I have made a resolution never to speak to you or anyone associated with the Federation again, but I commit to public record these parts of my story for whatever purpose this may serve.

"After my ejection from the Academy, I teamed up with Victor Ebbet and Chang Bingwen who were trying to resurrect very long-dead species from fossil remains. They had been micro-slicing Neo-proterozoic fossils and had some hint that rather than organic remains being replaced haphazardly by inorganic minerals, there seems to have been a definite order, shall we say, in which these molecules were laid down. If we could find a way to tease out that order and thus determine what molecules were originally present, we could construct a genome based on what we know about similar animals today extant."

DORCAS

Sounds like writing to publish.

CAPTAIN

Thank the ghods we don't have "publish or perish" anymore or she'd definitely perish.

"The problem was how to trace the deposition of the molecules. I determined that Britsa "Oil," with a nuclear tag applied, would probably do the trick due to its ability to flow along any seam, no matter how narrow, in a solid. Britsa is a short-chain molecule with a radical at the end which can be easily knocked off and replaced by an atom of a radioactive element, making it easy to follow. By tracking its motion, we could determine the original shape of the proteins that the minerals had replaced, and by testing the ages of the minerals, we could see which had been laid down first. As britsa eventually breaks down as it travels, the need for a generous supply of it is evident.

"Britsa is rare and valuable and we would need a lot. Buying that amount would not only be expensive but, very likely, suspicious. Synthesizing that much would also draw unwanted attention. So we set out to find a planet where we could find a natural source.

"This took many years but we finally found britsa in copious supply in certain areas of Beta Kerrotyn. Additionally, we found evidence that we had not been the first people there, in

the form of a large, black 'egg,' which of course I collected.

"We had obtained a 'hairball computer' from the Shree, which we thought would serve our needs. When one day I happened to examine the 'egg' in the vicinity of the hairball, the egg opened. There appeared to be nothing inside. But when Ebbet offered me a sandwich and I touched him, he was suddenly and apparently 'beamed up' to somewhere.

"Chang raced around looking for ships in the vicinity, but there were none except ours. He left in it, saying that he was going to get us some help and would be back. Eight months have passed and there has been no sign of him.

"Being alone on Beta Kerrotyn, I devoted myself to work on the trilobite fossils I had on hand when I was visited by Federation members and tricked into visiting their ship. Upon touching a trilobite-like crew member to assess its surface texture, this creature too was 'beamed up' in the same way as Ebbet had been.

"I do not know how, why, to where or what is responsible for any of these events. I can only say in my defense that I made no action of any kind that would have, to the best of my knowledge, led to the demonstrated results.

I am telling you all this since both Ebbet and Chang are now gone, and therefore my NDA no longer applies.

"I have nothing more to say."

CAPTAIN folds up the tablet again. She and DORCAS look at each other and each, in their own way, sighs. DORCAS gets up, goes to the synthesizer, and returns with a tray full of snacks.

DORCAS

Have donut.

CAPTAIN

Need donut.

CAPTAIN helps herself to a donut. DORCAS eats something Dorcas-y. CAPTAIN touches her com badge.

CAPTAIN

Security, beam Ruba back down to her camp.

SECURITY

Aye, Captain.

CAPTAIN

(to Dorcas)

We're probably not going to get anything else out of her anyway. We'll let her think she won for now.

DORCAS

(Pointing to the Device)

That is?

CAPTAIN

Oh, something Moriarty is supposed to have found planetside. found. I was going to take it and put it away.

DORCAS

(Suspiciously)

Should be in quarantine box.

CAPTAIN

I know. But Mudd and Moriarty both handled it, so I guess it's safe enough until I get it into one.

DORCAS goes to the synthesizer and returns with a quarantine box.

DORCAS

With all due respect, put in! Order from trusted friend! Put in!

CAPTAIN

(Sighing)

All right, all right, here you go.

CAPTAIN puts the Device in the quarantine box, which DORCAS seals.

DORCAS

Feel better now.

CAPTAIN

(standing)

I'm going to go drop this off in quarantine, then I'm going to my quarters and having a think.



DORCAS

I walk with! Wrote new filk song!

The two of them get up and leave, CAPTAIN swinging the quarantine box at her side.

FADE:

## 6 ENGINEERING

6

GUS, MAX and the inevitable STINGERS are there. The STINGERS are carefully examining the Hairball as MAX rattles off names of molecules they find. CAPTAIN and DORCAS enter.

GUS

Good evening, Captain, Commander Dorcas, what brings you here?  
(noticing the quarantine box)  
What have you got there?

CAPTAIN

Contraband.

GUS

Oh-ho! I do so love a bit of contraband!

CAPTAIN

Want to see it? Maybe you can figure out what it is.

GUS

Happy to have a look!

CAPTAIN touches a button on the box, and it begins to open. DORCAS grunts. CAPTAIN snorts, closes the box, touches another button, and the box turns transparent. She hands it to GUS.

GUS

Oh, now, now, now, what might this be, one is led to wonder.  
Let me see.

GUS sets the box on a table and examines it from all sides.

GUS

What is known about this, then?

CAPTAIN

Found by Moriarty on Beta Kerrotyn near a stash of britsa. Another one was found some months ago by Ruba Lacincia. She says it opened when she placed it near a hairball computer. What a hairball computer is I have no idea.

GUS

Oh! Indeed. I believe that's one there. Took me quite a while to get used to it, I must say, it really is rather disgusting. I'm having our geologists go over it, and then I will have a nice deep study of it myself. You say, one of these opened when last it was in proximity to one of these things?

CAPTAIN

Yeah.

GUS

Very interesting. One is led to wonder if it might happen again. Is one not?

CAPTAIN

Go ahead and give it a try.

DORCAS

But keep it in the quarantine box!

GUS

Certainly.

GUS picks up the quarantine box and walks over to the hairball with it. Suddenly the Device opens with such force it bows the sides of the box. GUS picks up a tricorder and checks it, seems to find no leaks, then feels around the sides with his hands, just to be sure.

GUS

That was interesting...

GUS puts the box back on a table, and continues scanning it. Occasionally he taps it. Max and the inevitable Stingers come to investigate.

DORCAS

All still contained?

MAX

Stingers say there is a weird smell.

GUS scans the box again.

GUS

Tricorder says there's nothing escaped from the box.

A cat jumps on the table, as does one of the STINGERS. GUS grabs the cat and hands it to the CAPTAIN—and both CAT and CAPTAIN are beamed away. There is a lot of shouting and brou-ha-ha. GUS stares at his hands.

DORCAS

(to com badge)

Captain? Captain? Fa?

Computer, Captain still aboard ship?

COMPUTER

Captain Shimbo is not aboard the *Trouble* at this time.

DORCAS

Missing any cats?

COMPUTER

With this many, who'd know?

DORCAS growls

COMPUTER

One cat unaccounted for: Iggy, usually under the nominal care of Ensign Klepperman.

DORCAS shakes her head and ruffles every feather on her body. One of the Stingers starts climbing on the quarantine box and, without thinking, GUS goes to shoo it away, and STINGER is also beamed away.

GUS

(panicking)

Oh, dear Well of Justice, it's me! It's me! But I never touched Lacincia, I haven't even met her! Oh dear! (touches the table to see if it is also beamed away. It is not.) Oh dear. Oh my...

DORCAS

Computer! bot to Engineering, take box away, and put in quarantine, and bot stay box.

(to GUS)

Full clean cycle on ... whatever you think needs. Then you, confined to quarters until further notice. Beam there. Touch nothing. Nothing warm anyway.

The STINGERS remaining on MAX are racing around as if stampeding in frenzy, from one end of MAX to the other.

DORCAS

Max, you to quarters, calm Stingers down.

(to nobody)

Off to decontamination I go. Poor feathers.

FADE:

**7 AN OUTDOOR TRANSPORTER PAD ON A DISTANT PLANET WITH A BLACK SKY**

**7**

CAPTAIN stands on what must be a transporter pad, and looks around skeptically. IGGY the cat is with her, so is a STINGER. She finds herself on a planet. The stars are so bright and so numerous, the planet must be in a globular cluster. There are lots of rocks, and a few plants of various sizes.

She is on a small island, in the center of which, apart from the pad, is a tall pole with a light at the top, which illuminates the ground as if it were moonlight. The surrounding water is surprisingly calm. No other islands are visible.

Having been a Girl Scout in her youth, CAPTAIN remembers:

CAPTAIN

"When you're lost, stay where you are."

CAPTAIN pulls the tablet out of her pocket and scans around. It's not a tricorder but it works just as well. She seems unimpressed with what she finds. IGGY crawls onto one shoulder, and the STINGER onto the other. Cat and Stinger swat at each other briefly. CAPTAIN sits down and waits.

Some stage-wait-time later:

HUMAN MALE VOICE, IN THE DISTANCE:

Ahoy there!



FADE:

**8 ADMIRAL'S QUARTERS**

**8**

The doorbell chimes.

ADMIRAL

(Glances at the view screen she had used to speak with T'Pryl.)

Curiously...)

Enter?

Enter First Officer DORCAS, completely without feathers, carrying a pad.

ADMIRAL

(Gasps). Come in! Dorcas is it? What happened to you? How can I help?

DORCAS

Emergency decontamination. Easier to just molt. Grow back. Admiral, been an accident. Or something.

ADMIRAL

Give me your report. Where is your Captain?

DORCAS

Question of day, that. Uncle Mudd gets strange object. Handles without quarantine. Captain confiscates. First Officer requires object quarantine. Go with Captain to quarantine area, stop at Engineering on the way. Engineer takes Object. Put on table, next to hairball computer Engineer is studying. Cat and Stinger jump on table too. Object opens suddenly. Nothing recorded escaping. Gus picks up cat, hands cat to Captain, cat and captain beam away. Gus panics, grabs Stinger, Stinger beams away. No idea where.

Being senior officer on ship, you now command. Orders, Admiral?

ADMIRAL

(after some internal deliberation)

You are now my Number One. Who is on duty on the Bridge?

DORCAS

Chamberlain, Helmsman. Traylor, Navigator. Self, Communications. Possibly also Chip, cryptanalyst, possibly also Sandor, Engineer, possibly also Mirjin, Security. All about to go off-duty.

ADMIRAL

Assemble the senior officers in the Ready Room immediately. You are not to speak of this to anyone. Have communications announce the Captain is indisposed and the Admiral...

No, Belay that order. Have all of the witnesses meet me in the Ready Room immediately.

DORCAS

Admiral, what about crew? Small ship, everybody know everything. Anything to say to them?

ADMIRAL

Not at this time.

## 9 INDOOR, READY ROOM

8

RATTY, T'PRYL and ADMIRAL are in quiet discussion as the Bridge crew enters and takes their seats. Swanson considers taking the Captain's Chair. He thinks better of it and sits elsewhere.

ADMIRAL

Until otherwise authorized, what is discussed in this room will not be shared with the crew. Do I gather correctly that we all know the current situation?

There are general mumblings of assent.

ADMIRAL

Commander, please report on the situation.

SWANSON

The key question is why was the Captain taken. If it was an accident or unintentional, then it should not be an immediate danger, so I will ignore those possibilities.

The Captain is a Mediator, a very calming influence for the various species she recruited for the Trouble's crew. Without her presence inter-species communications will break down and turn toxic. Therefore I assume a threat to the ship and its mission.

The Murchees are one of the *Old* races and an ancient enemy to the Dragons I am associated with. The Dragons report there is a stealthed Murchee outpost six hours away by warp drive. If Beta Kerrotyn is a Murchee trap planet that will be the control and the most likely place to find the Captain. The Murchees didn't do redundancy. The Dragon band I have would enjoy visiting it. They are not famed for peaceful resolutions but that is one of the reasons they hang around with me. The Murchees are known for their jealousy of all Gifted species so malice and traps must be expected.

There is some urgency as the Trouble's crew will, as I said,

become quarrelsome at least in the Captain's absence without her Mediator influence.

Many of the crew's species have some version of a combat mode where they focus communication, put aside distractions and shield themselves against attack. Federation military discipline and protocols can work with those modes, making us less vulnerable to attacks and disruptions and more deadly in our attacks.

Going to general quarters is a first step to that state. This ship has had no such drills yet but even a single one would prepare the way. Participating in combat mode is, however, always a worry as it can be misused.

I have a trained multi-species combat mind and could provide a command focus. It does not have to be adopted before a crisis point: probably cannot be.

No one involved here is a known new Federation contact, so I cannot claim authority as First In Commander. I recommend that the crew consider their experiences with the First-In Scouts. The Trouble should adopt a real General Quarters status if this ship does approach the Murchee control system."

ADMIRAL

Opinions? Anything unusual?

DORCAS

Trouble a decidedly non-military ship, but what you say has merit, I suppose. In other news, detected one very quiet signal, outgoing. Chip is working on.

CHIP waves her antennae in assent.

RATTY

Nothing unusual reported to me.

MIRJIN

Our transporters were not involved in whatever happened. No outside vessels are in our vicinity except yours, T'Pryl. Three crewmembers are missing: the Captain, one Cat, and one Stinger. They are not on Beta Kerrotyn. The remaining Stingers, having lost one of their own, are in rather a lather.

SWANSON

May I suggest we restrict the crew to general quarters, level nine to maintain order.



All Trouble crew present turn to Swanson and glower, each in their own way.

MIRJIN

With all *due* respect, Lt. Commander, are we expecting a mutiny? That kind of restriction might seem to many that you are seizing the ship. You aren't taking over the ship without authority, are you sir? This crew is very loyal to Captain Shimbo and they don't know you.

Everyone grunts approval and nods, or whatever they do, to Mirjin.



ADMIRAL

(turning to SWANSON)

When it comes to this type of situation, I would be more likely to distrust the officer who is too eager to assume power.

(Speaking to all those assembled)

Our immediate goals are to find the Captain and her companions, find out what that woman knows and do a thorough evaluation of that planet.

Dorcas is my Number One. Your responsibility is to maintain order and keep gossip to a minimum.

DORCAS

Aye, Admiral-san.

ADMIRAL

Engineering, keep sweeping the area for any anomalies. We've had three events. Something must have changed at the time of at least one of them.

GUS

Yes, Ma'am. Certainly Ma'am.

ADMIRAL

Doctor, have a behaviorist review the videos to see if they can observe any anomalies or actions by anyone in the area of the abductions.

RATTY

I'll get Mr. Skinner on it right away.

ADMIRAL

Swanson, I need a report on your teams' findings immediately. We need a full search of the planet.

Questions? (She looks around at the officer) No? You have your orders. Dismissed.

RATTY lingers. Swanson is slowly preparing to leave.

RATTY

(taking a scan of the Admiral) You handled that really well. How are you feeling? Your vitals are running high. If this weren't an emergency I'd suggest you take time off.

ADMIRAL

I'm okay enough. (Sitting, she taps her head) Something is missing. (She scans one of the reports.) Swanson, stay a minute. What do you know about those two guests of the Captain, Mudd and the other one?

SWANSON

Mudd is the captain's uncle, apparently. Mudd's friend

was observed stowing away on Thunderbird 3. He returned in his own craft some hours later. I'm sure he had contraband with him that he brought from the planet.

ADMIRAL

Was that reported to the Captain?

SWANSON

Lt. Mirjin told me the Captain said she'd handle it. She went to Engineering from their quarters prior to her disappearance.

SWANSON

I have a report that the one called Moriarty was hanging around in a nearby Jefferies Tube prior to her disappearance. He seems to be attracted to and collecting shiny objects. (He said casually) Those two shouldn't be allowed to freely roam the ship. I was told that technically, they aren't—but who knows...

ADMIRAL

Okay. Work with Security to track these two down and confine them to some escape-proof part of the ship. There has to be somewhere. (She mutters). Review all scans. I want to know where they are and where they were every single second they have been on board this ship. I want a detailed report about how Moriarity got off this ship, where he landed and what he brought back.

SWANSON

(Hands her a pad)

It's all in my report.

(He sits while ADMIRAL scans it)

Are you feeling any better?

ADMIRAL nods

SWANSON

No. You're not. Maybe you should report this matter to Starfleet and let them bring in some support. You could stand down and get whatever treatment you need.

ADMIRAL

And who would command the Trouble in my absence? I'm not sure

Dorcas has the starch in her to take command. This crew's loyalty is to this captain. Most of the crew would have to be assigned to general quarters so someone else could easily take over command and run the ship. Any suggestions who might be able or qualified to do that, Commander?

SWANSON

(Grumbles) Not Commander. That is not my reason for wanting to restrict the crew to quarters.

ADMIRAL

(Interrupts. Stands pointing to the screen.)  
There it is! That little [insert invective of choice] stole it right off my person at the hors d'oeuvres table at that get-acquainted dinner! First night I'm here I get robbed.

SWANSON

I told you weren't feeling your best. You looked shaky. No being could have robbed G.B. Swanson if you were one hundred percent okay.

ADMIRAL

Humph. I need that back.  
You and Security can interrogate our guests since you want to hone your skills after you retrieve it. I'd advise you to review the videos with an eye on observing the interactions between the Captain and our guests. Maybe they can tell you what she has on those two to make them cooperate with her.

SWANSON

(After the room is totally empty) Seriously. What do you really want my men and my dragons to do?

**TO BE CONTINUED...**

# The Accidental Lunatic

by Marjorry Donatello

Part 4

18th September

An amazing, astounding thing happened today! I got a Deity Box! Me, a college freshman working on my own, with no grants and no lab and I have, on my kitchen table, a REAL Deity Box!



You probably know this, but Deity Boxes, even the lowest-levels of them, are illegal in most countries on Earth. Where you can get them, they require you to jump through so many ridiculous hoops and licensing and regulation and pre-registering your research and you have to be at least a post-doc to get one and have access to a lab with special quarantine areas like they use for rabies and stuff. You usually need security clearance from your institution and everything, it's a nightmare.

Anyway, was cleaning my kitchen, Sharon came in and went over some coursework with me, and then in a little while Jessikka Isaacson came in with this box, and put it on the table.

"No opening the contents of the box in here," she said. "Though you can open the box."

Box was full of smaller boxes, all sealed. There was a pocket-microscope-camera, little—I mean tiny little—vials of individual proteins and enzymes, some DNA/RNA templates, you know, the kind you can just plug into a reader, and stuff, and a box of chits; one for a level-5 quarantine chamber, again like you use for rabies, a chit for time on the Slicer, a chit for access to personal documents of various professors who might be able to help me and wouldn't if I didn't have the right permissions... I mean, I couldn't say anything, just jumped around like a complete idiot for what must have been half an hour at least, because really!

Jessikka said, "You have this for one semester unless you can demonstrate actual progress by exam week."

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," Sharon said, "she's my student and I'mma get her through her exams no matter what, and now you give her this?"

"Eh, that's your look-out," Jess said to her. Then she turned to me and said, "Remember to use your powers for good." She pointed to the cat. "And that goes for you, too!" And then she left. Just like that.

I pulled out a chair and sat down and took everything out of the box and read every word on everything and then I stood up and put everything back in the box reading everything all over again.

"I'm restricting you to one day a week working on this project," Sharon said. "Your education is more important."

"Awww..."

"Sorry, kid, you're stuck on the Moon now, your education is even more important than you think. One day a week, that's it. And that means DAY, you know. You eat your meals and you sleep at bedtime. And you exercise. No excuses. If you don't keep this up, I'll have the Hairy Death come and shed all over your experiment."

I think I said something like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah" and then Sharon left. And here I was with this ABSOLUTE TREASURE and, I realized, I had nobody to tell about it!

My family probably only heard about it as part of some "If you're not already terrified you should be" story on those sites they frequent.

If I wanted to tell anybody in the Academy well, they probably wouldn't be impressed and besides, no real-life talk in the academy office and I never really saw any of them anywhere else.

It's really lousy having something really outstanding happen in your life, and you have nobody to tell about it!

So I told the cat.

After classes were over for the day, I sent to the labs (several levels underground, I mean, even under the Underground and the Big Gap you have to mind!) and found the compartment I'd been assigned to work in. They take containment seriously here, I had to suit up and everything before I got in. The "lab" is small, about the size of my flat. There's ...

Wait a minute.

Just caught myself using "proper English!"

WHAT ARE THESE PEOPLE DOING TO ME?!

Put the box in the lab. Left, dumping the clean suit.

Now I need to go somewhere, and find my own self again.

But where do I go?

In other news, I been transplanting seedlings from the greenhouses to the rooftops. Finally got all the old dead stuff in the compost bin. Was totally awful.

And I still know SFAWarg my report.

You know how, sometimes, you feel sick and you have no idea why? Yeah. One of them days.



## Making Trouble!

### Part 2: I Made All The Mistakes, So You Don't Have To!

by Fara Shimbo

Where did I leave off? Ah, yes.

My old printer was a Lulzbot Mini, which could print stuff no more than 10cm<sup>3</sup>. It also used (nominally) 3mm filament, which is getting harder and harder to come by.

The new printer is a Voxelab Aquila 2 (Hmmm... that was my 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, Sister Aquila), which prints things twice as big, so I thought, "Wow," I can make the ship nice and huge!

But alas, there were problems along the way.

I had to get some 1.75mm filament for it. This was no problem, really. What was the problem is that I like to use ABS filament, which is recyclable, but that, too, is getting harder and harder to come by. But I did find one.

It occurred to me that if I tried to print the saucer in one piece, I would be using more filament in support materials than I'd use for the actual part. So, I cut the saucer in half, so I could print the top and the bottom separately and minimize the support material I'd need.

This worked fine; but as Super Quality, the print took 31 hours.

So much can go wrong in 31 hours, and most of it has to do with two things: cats, and drafts.

The problem with cats is obvious. Drafts, not so much, but even a slight draft can ruin the adhesion of the layers. I got around both these problems with the Lulzbot in that Bob built me a case for it. The Aquila being so large, the case would not possibly fit. Bob is making a new case, but it won't be ready for a while so I had to move the Aquila into the "build room" I use for making my Block City buildings. Since my computers are on the other side of the house, I'm getting a lot of exercise.

A real problem that lots of people have with 3D printers is "build-plate/bad adhesion." You have to make sure your first layer sticks well and truly to the bed so that other layers have something reliable to stick to. Back when I was using the old MakerBot Thing-O-Matic (yes, I go back that far. I go back further than the Internet, which amazes some of the young people I know), the way one assured good bed adhesion was to spray the bed with Aqua-Net hairspray. Stick glue is also favored, and of course nowadays there are products specifically made for bed adhesion. (Twice the price of Aqua-Net and work just the same, but hey...)



With the Aquila, the problem I started having was that those first layers adhered to the bed *too* well! Getting them off took elbow grease—and warped the thing you’d just carefully made if it hadn’t completely cooled, I found out after printing that first saucer top. So I made an investment that has proved Oh, So Worth It: a set of magnetic bed pads! One part sticks to the bed and on top of that sits a removable pad. The pad is flexible, so when the model is cool, you can flex the pad and the model—usually—pops right off.

So, I printed the top and bottom of the saucer, which was all fine. Then I decided I would fill-in the lettering with all this Glow-In-The-Dark paint I’ve gotten.



Trouble is, I can’t paint. Even when I was young and doing huge drawings with a 6x0 Rapidograph, my hands were never steady enough to use a paintbrush. Now that I get Senior Discounts wherever I go, well, let’s just say the reason I do everything in Blender is that the Crazy Old Bat has trouble using a fork these days. So, the paint job came out pretty rotten.

Ah! I wonder, I said. The *Trouble* is supposed to be metallic black, kind of like Bob’s electric car, which is a color called “Magneto.” I checked to see if there was such a thing as black “silk” filament (“silk” is the filament equivalent of mica). If I use that, I can fill up the letters, which are indented, with glow paint and then sand the thing until the letters are flush with the

hull. Problem solved, I thought.

No. Problem not solved. If you try to sand silk filament, it loses everything that makes it cool. So you end up, as with the photo above, having to sand the whole thing, or sand nothing. OR try to find a way to mask the windows and the lettering.

Tried latex masking. Nope. Tried masking tape. Nope. The problem here was that glow paints don’t dry hard; they stay putty-like and when you sand, no matter how carefully, you’re likely to pull up all the paint you so carefully put down.

“But Fa!” I can hear you say. “Why didn’t you just leave the windows empty and light them from the inside?” Well, that comes with its own whole selection of *tsuris*. You can make a column that goes all the way down to the bed and *hope* the .stl encoding and/or the slicer software won’t fill it in like it’s doing you a favor, but... yeah, no that doesn’t work reliably, so...

I figured I would put that problem aside for the moment, and start printing the secondary hull and the nacelles. And again, in order to cut down on the filament waste from building support structures, I would cut those into Top and Bottom as well.

This turned out to be an *extremely* bad idea.

At first, bed-adhesion once again reared its ugly head. The fronts of the nacelles, and the forward point of the secondary hull, kept curling up. When I finally got the bed adhesion problem fixed, the print would go fine (I have a webcam on the camera so I don't have to open the door and create drafts) for about 5mm in height, then the layers would start coming apart and once again, the tips would curl.

That weird noise you may have heard at the beginning of July that probably set off your local air-raid or tornado sirens, that was me, swearing in the kind of Italian that sets people's hair on fire.

So, I gave up on having the nacelles in two halves, and used the whole thing. Printed beautifully.

Then it warped. And kept on warping for several days!!

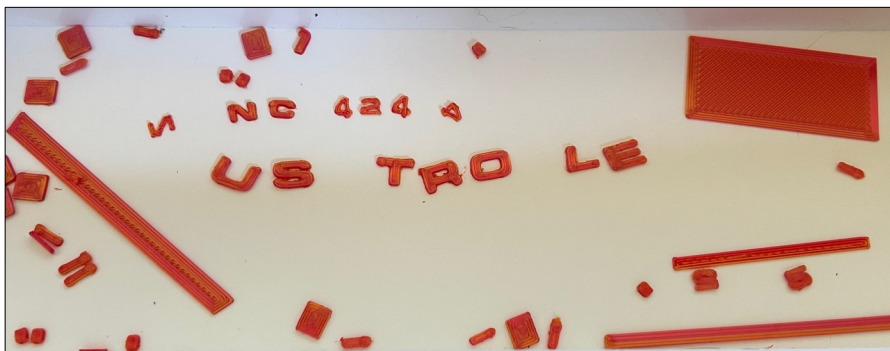
And the paint job, which I did just for practice, was still pretty awful.

On the other hand, when I took apart some of the support structures so that I could throw them in my Junk Filament box for eventual I-Don't-Know-What, I noticed that there were, in fact, some pretty cool grids and stuff, and wouldn't they be great to use... somewhere. So I saved them. I always save stuff like this, because you never know, do you?



Then, out of the blue, came An Idea!

What if I took the various parts, duplicated the indented areas that were to be lettering and filament and windows and so on, and printed these as insets?



I saw online, and got some because I thought it was really neat, filament that is one color on one side and another on the other. Okay, let's try that!

Well, here's the problem with that. The lettering on the ship is curved in two different directions.

The way I had to get a version of the letters that curved was to select the outline of all the letters, extrude them down onto a plane, and then carefully delete all the faces that were not the letters on the plane. Took hours to do, and six minutes to print. And it worked! And the letters actually FIT!

I also made some strips, planes, and various other things that I figured I could attach here and there because wouldn't they look cool!

And as far as lighting up the ship, glow-in-the-dark filament is a thing! I am waiting for a sampler of it as I type.

And like it couldn't get even better, Bob saw this morning a video where someone printed stuff on holographic paper and...

Oooo, just think!!!

Also, as I'm sitting here typing, I'm printing out a new saucer top. Another 30+ hour print. But I timed it so that it will be done around bedtime, and have all night to cool off and set up before I try to take it off the bed.

Wish me luck.

[The next day or so...]

The 30-hour print is done, and now I have a new saucer top. I filled in the lettering with the letters I had made with glow-in-the-dark filament, and while they were good, they were not very strong; so I carefully painted the tops of the letters with some really excellent glow-paint I've got. I used the colored glow-paints for other windows and various things, and here's the result.

I wish I could say I was completely happy with the surface, but I wasn't. So I gave the whole thing a coat of Tamiya Clear, and set it out in the sun to dry.

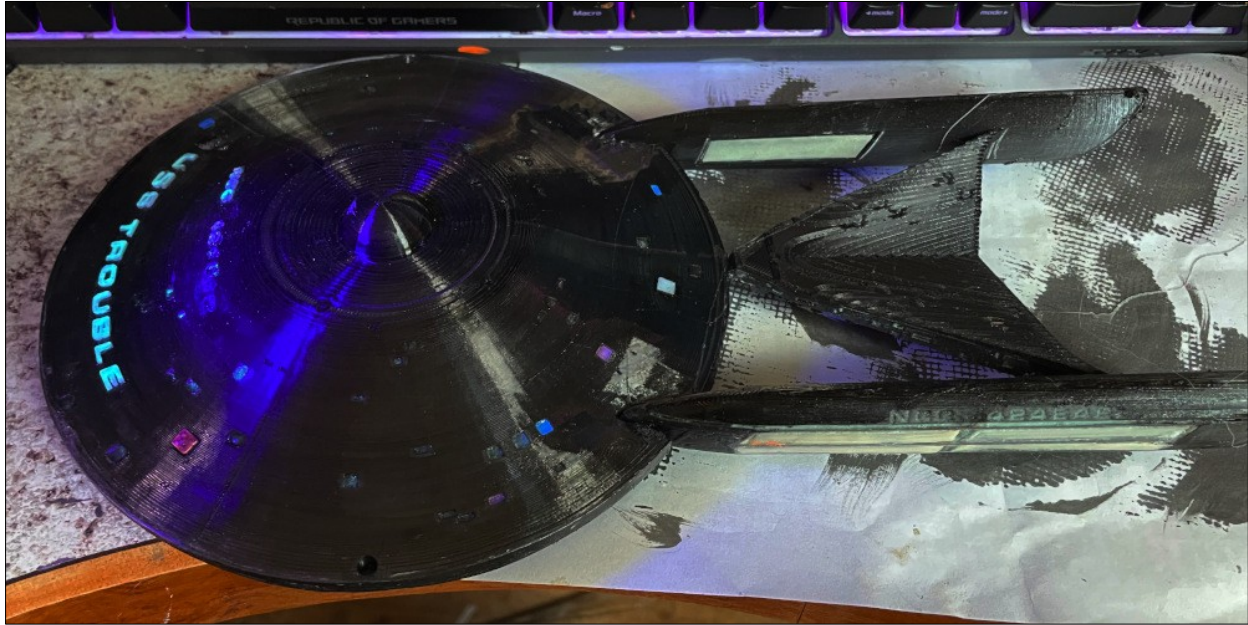
This... was a mistake. In the strong Colorado sun, it kind of melted.



After wondering what in the world to do about it, and running out of filament (which ain't cheap, I can tell you!) I put it back out in the sun to soften, and then molded it back into shape over the last saucer-top I'd made. Worked well.

Then I set out to print the nacelle sections. Not a 30-hour print, but it certainly took forever. This time,

the nacelles came out well. I waited until the print was completely cool before removing it from the printer bed.



Decorating the nacelles took a little more work. The glow-filament letters didn't fit well, even though they were made from the same model. Different brands of filaments, and even different colors in the same brand, shrink at different rates. I can accommodate this on my architectural designs, but with something this complicated, it just proved impossible. So I used a syringe to squirt glow-paint into the recesses for the lettering. This worked, more or less, and required only minimal sanding. Glow filament did work for the areas of the nacelles that had to be not-black, and I was pretty happy with the result.

You know how these things go. As Sherlock Holmes once said, "...that supreme gift of the artist [is] the knowledge of when to stop." And at this point, stop I did, and shipped the *Trouble* off to its new home at Germaine's.

Will I ever make one for myself? Well, maybe someday. It was so much trouble and strife that I need a break from it for now. Instead I'm designing and printing some haunted houses. But if you would like to print out the *Trouble* for yourself, the .stl files are available for download on our website at

<https://retrozine.net/Art/3DFiles/TroubleSTLFiles.tar.gz>

Total printing time for a finished model is approximately 100 hours at this relatively large scale, and, of course, you can print it in any scale you like. If you do print it, please show us your work!

Oh... and Bob managed to fix the Lulzbot, so now I've got two printers going at once!

## And last but not least, about that AI Generated Art...

Here's what I asked it to draw for me:

- **A** (page 9): "A golden horse with a comb jelly." (I have a feeling it doesn't know what a comb jelly is!).
- **B** (page 11): "A purple dragon with feathers, flying."
- **C** (page 12): "Old Spock sitting in a rocking chair on a porch, with a shotgun and a dog."  
*(I guess I should have specified that he have legs. The bot gives you four renditions to choose from, as in F and G. In none of them did Spock have legs.)*
- **D** (page 14): "Robot cat on Neptune."
- **E** (page 16): "A parrot sailing a pirate ship with iridescent sails."
- **F** (page 20): "The Weasel Queen, with a jeweled crown." *(Alas, most are not weasels...)*
- **G** (page 23): "A weasel wearing a jeweled crown." *(Should have specified, no eye infections.)*
- **H** (page 24): "A hummingbird knight."
- **I** (page 25): "Mountains made of gemstones."
- **J** (page 26): "A robot cat on Mars." *(Well, there's a robot, and a cat... but looks more like Io.)*
- **Back Cover**: "Sapphire tiger in a forest." *(I added the Cubist filter in GIMP.)*

How close did you get?

Got a story to tell, in words, pictures, or sound?

**WE WANT YOU! Yes, YOU!**

Deadline for the next Issue (No. 7) is **21 November 2022.**

Submissions can be sent to [editor@retrozine.net](mailto:editor@retrozine.net) or to [submissions@retrozine.net](mailto:submissions@retrozine.net).

Here are some tips for getting things to us.

 **WRITTEN WORD:**

For New and Original written-word science fiction, fantasy and fanfic, please send your work in a **plain text file** (no pre-formatting or PDFs, please, it only makes our job harder! We will make them here). This may be .txt (plain text), .odt (OpenOffice, LibreOffice), or .doc/.docx (Microsoft Office), though we can read pretty much every file format you can think of. We don't have a word limit, but we may suggest that anything very long be serialized.

**NOTA BENE:** Initial submissions of longer works must be at least 1,000 words so that we can properly decide if your work is going to be a good fit for our audience. If you're 1,000 words or less, just send the whole thing.

If you are submitting a story that has previously been published, please note we have a cut-off date; we are only accepting work published in the 20th Century. Please include the place it was originally published, the editor at the time, the date of publication, and any reviews you think might be of interest to potential readers.

If you are including illustrations, please see the notes below for whatever type of art you have. If you were not the artist, please forward permission to use the art from the original artist if the work was not a work-for-hire. (A "work-for-hire" is any work that has been ordered from an artist and paid for, and is therefore no longer the legal property of the artist.) If you wish to use a work which you have purchased from an artist, such as a print, make sure you purchased publication rights as well.

 **SPOKEN WORD/READ FOR YOU:**

Please send text files first! We have really good, experienced editors here who may want to suggest clarifications, additions and the like. Once the story has been accepted, you may choose to narrate it yourself, or choose a narrator. (And please, no offense intended, but please carefully consider your narration skills before taking this step!) We will give you instructions on how to send sound files if the story is accepted, but we reserve the right to reject a sound file if it is of poor sound quality (too much background noise, cats yowling to be fed, etc).

 **TRADITIONAL MEDIA ART:**

Please send these as .png files, with images as large and clear as you can manage and uncompressed. One shouldn't have to say this, but please only send images of your own work unless the art is an illustration for a story which you are submitting at the same time. If you are considering submitting a print you bought from an artist, please refrain unless you purchased publication rights at the same time.

 **DIGITAL 2D:**

Same as the above really, but here we will accept .psd (Photoshop) and .xcf (GIMP) as well.

#### **3D/3D PRINTABLE:**

If you're just sending a static image (or a collection of different views of a 3D object you've made, the guidelines are the same as for Digital 2D. We'd much prefer either .blend (Blender), .skp (SketchUp) or .stl (stereolithography, the standard for most 3D printers) formats for these files. One of us (probably Fa) will likely print your model to make sure that there are no holes, that supports work, and to determine approximately the amount of time and how much filament a print takes. I (Fa) print on a Lulzbot Mini.

#### **MUSIC and MULTIMEDIA:**

Please, please, *compress these files before sending them!* [filename].tar.gz is preferred. We'll take .wav, .mp3 and .mp4 formats, as these are the most widely compatible with different operating systems. (If you are unfamiliar with translating between formats, Tenacity is an excellent, and free, tool for sound. If you want to try your hand at video recording and editing, Fa uses OpenShot on Linux (works on all platforms) for her YouTube videos; also free and very easy to learn.

#### **SCULPTURE, CERAMIC and GLASS:**

Pictures of same only, please. We cannot be responsible for the way objects subjected to the post may be handled (trust us, we can tell you horror stories). See the guidelines above. Please include the size and medium/media of your creation, and anything else you might think cromulent.

#### **LET'S GET CREATIVE!**

If you've got something that just doesn't fit into the categories above, please email a description, and we'll see if we can work something out.

#### **LICENSING:**

Original works which are being published for the first time can be [Creative Commons](https://creativecommons.org/) licensed. Do follow the link and look into it (creativecommons.org).

#### **LAST BUT NOT LEAST:**

You may only contribute **your own work!** You may not "agent" for someone else, or "surprise" someone by trying to have their work published for them. If you don't own it, don't send it. Fa has been bending computers to her will for almost fifty years now, and both of us have taught, and raised kids. Trust us, we know all the cheats.

Got it? Good! Please send submissions to [submissions@retrozine.net](mailto:submissions@retrozine.net). We will send you a note letting you know your submission was received, but we cannot guarantee when we'll get to look at it in depth.

See you next time!

