

# Epiphany Trek

LOGS: USS KONGO



## THE LITTLE FOXES

GARRY STAHL

# The Little Foxes

By Garry Stahl

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Fleet Captain James T. Kirk looked out over the bustle of the Felicity starbase shipyard. "Twelve years; that is all she lasted."

Admiral Feldar rose from behind his desk. "Hardly twelve Kirk. One must consider her career before your command."

Tim blushed slightly. "Of course Sir, I thought the refit would serve her longer."

"Well Kirk, Starfleet wants you in a new ship. We are going to be seeing a lot of change over in the next several years."

"She isn't even going out with a new crew?"

"No. The discoveries and technology coming out of Starbase 600 have changed everything. Dilithium is old hat. Disodium is the way things will be now. It will be up to fleet disbursement to decide her final fate, but I imagine she is headed towards the defense fleet of one of the Federation members. You have a valid point, she does have another good forty years in that hull. For system defense she is still a good ship. However *Kongo* is to be struck from the lists. Technology has passed her by."

Kirk looked out at the gleaming sliver-blue beast pinned in the space dock lights. "And this one?"

"Blue Dolphin. Built for you and the crew of the *Kongo*. Dual disodium HE warp core with an 18 light year per day cruising speed. Class 20 sensors, four turrets, class 12 phasers, and ionic disruptors."

"Well, I can't argue that this isn't a lot of ship. What about the name? A lot goes with a name."

"It was over 30 years between the 1710 and the 10455. We will not wait so long this time." Kirk stared at Admiral Feldar, with his mouth hanging open. "Close your mouth Kirk, it is unbecoming of the Captain's dignity '*USS Kongo* NCC 101710'. She isn't quite worthy of the 'A', but we wanted something special. The old 1710 saved a world, too many people forget that. She saved mine." Feldar gave Kirk a long meaningful look. "Bolia has not and will not forget." He bounced on his toes. "The dock crew starts painting tomorrow. I have the orders cut. When do you want the commissioning ceremonies?"

"When they finish the registry."

Feldar nodded curtly. "Noted. Meanwhile we need to start the transfer. Build-101710 is officially under your supervision until commissioned. Commander McWinters is the construction foreman. Coordinate with her on getting people moved in."

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McWinters turned out to be a bubbly woman with a Edinburgh brogue so thick Kirk came out of meetings with it stuck to the roof of his mouth. If it

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hadn't been for life with his Father she would be nearly incomprehensible. "Aye Captain tis no wee matter to be gettin' yer crew moved. But fer me tis only th' in, not th' oot ah need be worrrried aboot." She was favoring him with a current example. "Paintin' crew need nae intrafear wi' yer move."

Kirk nodded. "Good, coordinate with me ... my XO to get the exact details."

"Will ye be lookin' her o'er yerself?"

"I will indeed. My wife wants to look the quarters over. She is the one with a sense of style. I want to familiarize myself with the ship."

McWinters nodded. "I'll be gettin' about me work sir."

Tathilan wandered around the new quarters looking into the various built-ins provided. Tim was simply taking in the whole.

\*\*I thought we had space on the old *Kongo*. This rivals any first class inn we have ever been in.\*\*

\*\*It's better. Gensilan helped design it and she does like her comforts. This hull shape hides volume very well. We have more of it. Less on the surface of the ship, but a greater volume for no larger a crew. Everyone gets more space.\*\*

\*\*I wonder if we can fill it?\*

\*\*Don't worry, once we get it furnished it won't look so large.\*\*

----

Kirk looked around the massive rec deck. His officers and many of the crew stood decked out in their number one uniforms. The bright work gleamed new. The new ship smell was thick in the air. He laid the papers on the podium and smoothed them with a gloved hand. They crackled softly. He raised his eyes to the assembled company and read. "Fleet Captain James Timothy Kirk, on this stardate you are requested and required to take command of the *USS Kongo*, NCC-101710, to finish her fitting out, commission her, and sail in pursuit of what duties you may be assigned. Signed, Admiral Jon Luc Picard, Starfleet Command." At that moment bright lights flashed outside the new *Kongo* as every ship in the dock flashed her running lights to salute the first command of a new sister. Every ship but one. Alone and dark the old *Kongo* was being striped of her bright Starfleet colors.

Kirk wandered to the window and watched while his officers gathered around to back-slap and speak of the party to come. Tathilan slipped up beside him.

\*\*Regrets?\*

\*\*She was special, our ship, our ... home.\*\*

\*\*Life in the fleet; change is the only constant. We can make this one home as well.\*\*

Kirk smiled at his wife. \*\*Yes, we will make her our home as well.\*\*

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The new command chair needed a bit of breaking in. Even in the second week of their shake down cruise it still didn't feel quite right. Tim wondered how much of that was the chair and how much was him. He couldn't complain about the bridge itself. Spacious, open, and well lit; it was a pleasant environment to work in. It didn't have much more space than the old Ambassador class, but it felt bigger. Starfleet had decided on the ideal size for a bridge over 150 years ago and it hadn't changed except in superficial ways since.

The current round of tests was going well, and routinely. It didn't really require him. He stood up and started to head to the back of the bridge, then caught himself. The ready room was forward. "Mr Spacik. I'm going to get some work done."

"Aye sir, enjoy."

Kirk walked through the door to the side of the viewscreen. He knew Spacik wasn't making a Vulcan joke about enjoying datawork. Directly above him was the window that formed most of the ready room's ceiling. A view that was meant to be enjoyed. The ready room itself was huge as such things went. His old couch looked almost lost in here. Oh well, a chance to get it some company. You could hold a senior officer's meeting right here, but there was a nice conference room as well.

Tim shooed the cat off his desk and slid into his desk chair and started calling up the various reports that Starfleet was eager to have about their shakedown. While the *Kongo* was not the first of the class, she was of a new class and a class with new technology. The number of blue dolphins in front of her could be counted on the fingers of your two hands. The only other blue dolphin in Starfleet hands was the new *Abraham Dannon*. The rest were ADF ships, horned fleet. Add to that the fact that the disodium reactor itself was new and yes, the conservative halls of Starfleet Engineering required constant reassurance. Tim paged through his mail. The usual, mostly. A note from Professor Montgomery Scott inquiring as to how the *Kongo* was progressing. That would require special handling. The long lost and now recovered legendary engineer was part of the disodium development team.

\*\*Tartan borders?\*

He smiled at the thought. \*\*Let's not get cute. Just be extra detailed with the engineering report.\*\*

\*\*Thy will and all. Going to be much longer with the reports?\*

\*\*You tell me love. I usually sign off on your work.\*\*

\*\*I have the post shakedown orders.\*\*

\*\*Back on the Acceptian border I would imagine. Starfleet is not letting me forget that can of worms I opened.\*\*

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\*\*The very, out of the new Galrun Starbase, 424.\*\*  
\*\*It will be good to get back to work.\*\*

----

The last of the contractor engineers was dropped off and the *Kongo* was in deep space for real this time. Her Captain was playing with the long range plot. It indicated a huge swath of the Federation. Thousands of ships crawled across the plot that reached nearly 100 light years. The tactical plot reached out for 17 light years and was as detailed as he expected the short range sensors to be. They were cruising at an easy dsWF 7, over 2000 times the speed of light, about as fast as the older *Kongo* could go on her best day. This was going to surprise the Acceptians.

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Mr. Spacik entered the deck 17 crew lounge. Felialan was already in attendance with her engineers. Spacik glowered at the offending replicator. Felialan flicked an ear back at him. \*\*This is the third malfunction we have had in three days, in this lounge.\*\*  
“Unsettling to say the least.”  
\*\*Three times is enemy action. New equipment should not malfunction, especially new replicators that just passed a rigorous engineering inspection.\*\*  
“Indeed. I suggest we upgrade the diagnostic cycle. Tathilan?”  
“Yes Mr. Spacik.”  
“We are experiencing an undue number of malfunctions. Move to a beta level diagnostic for all ship's systems.”  
\*\*Beta level initiated.\*\*  
“I will report to the Captain.”

Tim tapped his stylus on the desk. “Yes, I see your point, three malfunctions, minor as they might be are a concern. Do you have a theory?”  
“No sir, not as of yet. There is always the possibility of deliberate action.”  
“That is disturbing. Let's approach this from both directions, as an engineering problem and as a social one. We will see what bears fruit. Tathilan, increase in ship sensors to level Yellow. Log the possible saboteur as the reason.

Felialan had the main boards of the three malfunctioning replicators in test rigs. The diagnostic tests had pinpointed exactly where the flaw was. Cmd Spacik looked over the test rig. "Any conclusions?"  
\*\*Yes, all three boards have different malfunctions. However all three have the same cause for the malfunction.\*\* She focused her viewer on one of the boards. \*\*Micro scratches across the traces. Different places each board, but

the same scratch.\*\*

"A flaw in assembly?" Spacik focused the view further.

\*\*I am not inclined to think so. The replicators affected are brought into the shipyard pre assembled. They are added to the ship during fitting out. The units themselves are assembled automatically. If there was a flaw in manufacture it should have been located in quality control at the manufacturer of the replicators themselves. Third, no two scratches are the same. None are deep enough to shut down the unit at once. They do increase the resistance in the area of the scratches and heat further damages it to the point of failure.\*\*

"There is a mark to either side of the scratch."

\*\*Yes, it does no damage, but is present.\*\*

Spacik further magnified the image. "Are these tool marks?"

\*\*It would seem to be so. But how are they made?\*

"What you are telling me is we have random precision scratches intended to disable equipment. These two marks run either side of the scratch, in parallel."

\*\*It looks like a tool mark, but the board is not in a location you can reach without taking the replicator apart. No one has been observed taking replicators apart. That lounge is turning out to be one of the busier on the ship.\*\*

"That is what I am thinking. Making such a mark consistently is more precision than a living hand could manage without a tool to guide that hand."

\*\*This would indicate deliberate action.\*\*

"Yes, and a tool to locate."

\*\*We are discussing a tiny tool head. It could be hidden on nearly anything. Other tools, jewelry, even a name badge.\*\*

Spacik turned from the monitor. "Indeed, a difficult task. Can you reproduce the tool?"

\*\*I can reproduce the tool head with reasonable precision. We haven't found any anomalous molecules on the boards. So I cannot be certain of materials. Shape I can be mostly certain of.\*\*

"Then do so please. If we have an idea of what to scan for we will be better able to scan for it."

\*\*And the tool user. Someone intended to do this and acquired a tool that would do it. These are not random actions, but planned actions. There is also the matter of how they damaged the boards without being noticed.\*\*

"Logical. How many persons know of what we have discovered?"

\*\*You, myself, and Oscar.\*\*

"Oscar?"

Felialan's nose pointed to indicate the cat washing her paw across the room.

"And Oscar. Let us keep that list equally short. I believe the saboteur is still on the ship."

----

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Deateli looked across the room at Commander Spacik. "Social solution?"

"That is what Capitan Kirk has asked for."

"So he wants a non damaging social engineering solution to ferret out a saboteur. "

"Yes."

She sighed. "Tim isn't asking for much. I have zero idea what the motivation could be. Species, gender anything."

"We could start by process of elimination."

"By what criteria do we eliminate?"

I would place any crewman that as been with the ship any length of time on a second tier. We have our own filter for those with hostile intent; the Ane. Anyone that has been with the ship any length of time will have passed that filter."

"Assuming that it isn't the Ane themselves."

"I have reason to think we are safe there."

"Why?"

Spacik counted off his points. "One, the method of sabotage involved a highly technical device and the handling of it. Two, it is not how they think. Ane would get people to make mistakes. There would be no physical footprint to follow. Three no Ane crewman has transfered off the ship."

"The Aneilogs?"

"Likewise, I believe we are safe. They are Ane, mentally."

"That is four of the new crew down from 23. Only 19 tier one suspects left. I agree with your evaluation of Ane motivations and methods. We have a Vulcan, 8 Humans, two Orions gold, three Orions green, a Bajorian, a Cardassian, a Klingon, and two Cait. Do we eliminate any of them?"

"On the basis of race, no."

"Not even the Vulcan? I'm surprised."

"Deateli, there have been Vulcan saboteurs before. Logically we must consider they can happen again."

"Personally I'm inclined to drop the Klingon to the second tier as well. This sort of subtle campaign is not Klingon any more than it is Ane."

"Agreed. We are down to 18 prime suspects."

"From there I think we need to look into backgrounds. There are no standouts."

"I bow to your expertise on that matter."

"Then I better get to using it."

----

\*\*Felialan. I have another malfunction.\*\*

\*\*What this time Tathilan, replicator?\*\*

\*\*No, an antimatter monitor.\*\*

\*\*Have you secured the equipment?\*

\*\*Done. Secured and isolated.\*\*

Four officers met in the engineering lab. The damaged board in question locked in the test rig. Felialan had an electron scan of the board in question on the screen. \*\*Same thing, same tool. Tathilan and I have been doing some research as well.\*\*

\*\*We damaged a board in that fashion. We then ran it under load to the point of failure. 23.7 hours from damage to failure.\*\* Added Tathilan.

\*\*The antimater monitor was on line constantly. No one had a chance to dismantle it and scratch the board.\*\*

Spacik frowned at the screen. "Our saboteur is a robot."

Felialan flicked the magnification on the screen up. \*\*Exactly. If we go to this degree of magnification we see they are not scratches at all. It is a machined groove and the tracks to either side a series of holes."

Kirk looked at the images. "It resembles a rotary trench digger. The robot is holding itself down to the board to get the leverage required to dig."

\*\*Exactly.\*\*

"How small a device are we looking at?" Kirk was tapping his stylus.

\*\*It isn't in the nanometer scale, barely. Bigger than a nanite.\*\*

Tathilan jumped in. \*\*Too small for the diagnostic spiders to reach. They cannot get into the inter board areas.\*\*

"Can you make a smaller spider?"

\*\*One that small will suffer from very limited functionality. The existing spiders are the guts of tricorders on legs. They are considered macro level machines. When you approach the nano scale the limited number of atoms you have to work with severely limits the functionality of the nanite.\*\*

\*\*Which is why\*\*, added Felialan, \*\*Nanites are built with limited functions in mind.\*\*

Kirk frowned. "What about nanite swarms?"

Spacik took the question. "Specialized, like insects Capitan. Each 'species' of nanite in a swarm will have a single function, be it performing a chemical bonding task, directing other nanites, or picking the location they will do their task. On the individual basis the single nanite has less brain capacity than an ant. Necessarily as they are much smaller than ants. At that level we are counting atoms. Quantum level computing still only gives you a highly limited computer. Swarms will contain dozens of types of nanites."

"So we are talking a machine as smart as an ant then., if a fraction the size of one. Not a swarm, something mite sized, a micite."

\*\*To coin a term. I think that is exactly what we seek.\*\*

"What powers such a device? How long could it function and how fast could it move?"

"You're suggesting Capitan that they might need be placed?"

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"Yes. If I was going to wreck a ship and my little robots didn't need tending I would turn them loose and not be present for the fireworks. We are seeing a cautious approach here. First replicators, now more vital equipment. It smacks to me of someone either not sure of the capacity of the micites, or they need to place them carefully, and have limited numbers and limited access. Check the machinery damaged see if the micite is still in there."

Felialan got up. \*\*We'll get back to you Capitan, the sooner the better. Air currents could dislodge such a small device. I might even have inhaled it.\*\*

"Then go and do."

\*\*Mr. Spacik, we found one.\*\*

Spacik looked up from the antimatter reports. "Where was it?"

\*\*In the second replicator affected. On an isoliniar rod above the damaged board. It's in the lab now.\*\*

"I will be right down."

----

Counselor Deateli was sweating over the jackets of the newest of the *Kongo's* crew. So far no standouts, no red flags. There wasn't anyone that had a beef with other officers, no discipline problems, and no prisoners of war. They ran the full range of experience from recent academy graduates to officers long in service. Lt. Ghant the Klingon biologist being the oldest of the lot.

The green Orions seemed unlikely. All three were out of Starbase 600; two were engineers with experience on the disodium systems. They had arrived with the four Aneilogs. The Ane filter was in force. The gold Orions were a married pair. He was astrophysics she was medical. Nothing in their background suggested anything unusual. The task looked no simpler or any close to resolution.

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The robot was on its back looking remarkably like a dead bug. Felialan figuratively poked it with an electron stick. \*\*The feet match the holes, the 'mouth' the trench. we have our culprit right here.\*\*

"What are we discussing in terms of range?" Spacik was checking the readout on the tiny bot.

\*\*Power wise it would get 20 hours of operation. Travel distance would be no more than 2 meters. The device would have to be placed on or in the device to be disabled.\*\*

"It is possible to have micites that never reached their targets."

\*\*You are suggesting less discriminate use than the Captain?\*

"Affirmative, the devices could be be impinged on the air filters, having

been dislodged during normal maintenance cycles. Tathilan?"

\*\*Yes Commander.\*\*

"Who has the con?"

\*\*That will be Mr. Solin right now.\*\*

"Patch me up."

\*\*Aye aye sir.\*\*

"Bridge here."

"Mr Solin, come to all stop."

"Aye aye sir, all stop."

Spacik opened a log page and logged his order and the reason. "Mr Felialan, I want a level one diagnostic of all ship's systems, now. Tathilan, clean the air filters, with an eye to finding more micites. Increase sensor sweeps ship wide to Red level. Do not sound an alert. We are catching this person."

Four hours later Spacik was holding the staff meeting. In the holo space a number of micite robots were scattered on a bit of white plastic. Most motionless, a few trundled along, trying to perform the duty assigned. "Investigation of the air filters found 145 of the micites. Some as you see are still functioning. This means they were placed within the last 20 hours. Someone on the ship either has a supply or a means of making them. We remain at Red level sensor logging. I have teams performing a Level One/One sensor sweep of the ship at this time. Crew in the teams have been investigated by Haifaban our resident truth teller, and are assured to not be involved."

Kirk was tapping that stylus again, a sure sign of agitation. "You haven't ordered the replicator system shut down?"

"No sir. I am hoping that if our mark is panicked they will drop the gear in the solid waste disposal. Tathilan is alerted to this."

\*\*All replicator activity is currently closely monitored.\*\*

Dr. Hanson grumbled. "This is no way to treat people. Do you consider the entire ship guilty?"

"No Doctor. I consider no one guilty until we find proof. However, this plot is a clear danger to the ship, it must be stopped."

Kirk cut Hanson's reply off. "He's right Rich. We have to cut this off now. One antimatter monitor has been damaged already. The number of failures is both hearting and disturbing. Who ever it is has a lot of these bugs. Oh, Mr. Spacik did you order the airlocks locked down?"

"No sir."

"Tathilan, do so now. I don't want our saboteur deciding that suicide is the better part of valor."

Hanson cut in. "You're not worried about them tossing the robots overboard?"

"No, that would make them easy to recover. Tossing themselves overboard however presents certain difficulties."

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"Tim, I understand the concern for life, but anything tossed off the ship is, gone!"

Spacik steepled his hands. "A common misconception Doctor. The *Kongo* is currently at rest relative to the galactic motion. Anything ejected from the ship is easily recovered."

"And at warp or even underway at impulse the ports are locked down as a matter of routine." Added Kirk.

"We do have to be concerned with the effect this will have on morale."

Counselor Deateli's comment emboldened Hanson. "I agree, the lock down is not good for people."

"As long as it is not lengthy I am not worried about the lock down Doctor. It is the idea that one of our own wishes us harm. *Esprit de corp* will carry the crew through the lock down, but the idea of a traitor is far more damaging."

"Exactly." Kirk tossed the stylus on the table and lunched from his chair to pace. "Far more damaging. It would be better for the crew to go through a battle, as much as I hate battles."

Hanson looked at Kirk. "Tim, you would rather go though a battle?"

"Than this, as far as crew morale is concerned. There are other considerations. I'm not looking for a fight, ever."

"So, how much longer?"

Kirk looked across the table. "Mr. Spacik?"

"At the current rate of clearance I estimate 7.63 hours."

"What", examined Hanson, "not five places?"

"Doctor, one must account for the irregular nature of living beings."

Felialan continued. \*\*Quite so. The search as moved out of quarters and into the Jeffery's tubes....

Hanson had been following the conversation when something moving caught his eye. He first thought it might be a trick of the light. The second thought was pure primal fear that rooted him to his chair. That air grate was moving. It was set to the side and the biggest spider he had ever seen crawled out of the ventilation system. A man eating monster that must have been half a meter across. It put the grate back, and understanding replaced fear. *That* must be the spiders that Tathilan talks about. In the 12 years he has served the *Kongo* he had never seen one. Wow, it looked almost exactly like the namesake, size aside. The head was covered in shiny eyes, the body had eight limbs, two for manipulation and six for movement. It scuttled across the floor, seeking something. He watched soundlessly as it scuttled up to Felialan, the front limbs flipped to a different tool and it reached for her.

\*\*...So we expect that\*\* "SQUEEE!!!" Felialan jumped up and back spilling Deateli onto the floor.

Avery Solin jumped to her feet and helped Deateli up. Hanson grabbed the spider off the floor. He had to admit later not the smartest thing he had ever done, but it didn't shock him or anything, it just folded its legs. He tossed the

machine at Spacik and went to Deateli running his Fineberger over her.

"Fine, I'm fine I just got bowled over."

He turned his attention to Felialan, who was clearly calming down.

\*\*It pinched me. I didn't know it was there. I'm sorry.\*\*

Spacik clearly knew his way around the device. He was touching controls on the back. "The question is why. They don't tend to come out of the Jeffery's tube system. Your left foreleg was the location of issue." Spacik kneeled down and ran the spider/tricorder over her leg. "I see."

Kirk was waving his hands. "Inform those that don't!"

"Felialan has micites in her fur Capitan."

\*\*I do?\*

"You do."

\*\*I set the spiders to look for micites in range, and capture them.\*\* Added Tathilan.

Spacik hefted the inert spider. "Then it was doing its job."

\*\*But how did they get on me?\*

The intercom whistled. "Felialan, Engineering here. The spiders are trying to capture Oscar. She is howling up a storm, Freeman get her out of here."

Felialan's ears popped straight up. \*\*OSCAR! Lt. Freeman, take Oscar directly to the Medical isolation lab. Tathilan, beam them both there at once and initiate the field.\*\*

"Oscar?" Kirk was clearly at sea.

\*\*Oscar, Lt. Freeman's cat, she is friendly clean, doesn't get in the way, and sheds no more than I do, so she has the run of the deck. She rubbed against my leg before the briefing. I didn't think anything of it. She does it all the time. Now the spiders are trying to catch her and I have micites on me.\*\*

"She has micites on her?"

\*\*Good guess. Let's get down to the medical lab and find out.\*\*

Dr. Hanson handed the lightly sedated cat back to Lt. Freeman. Oscar was purring and drooling at the same time, eyes dilated. "Yes, she had micites on her. Several hundred micites."

Freeman looked concerned. "What about me sir."

Kirk waved it off. "Haifaban cleared you of any involvement Mr. Freeman. Someone is using your cat as a patsy." He clapped Freeman on the shoulder. "Please confine her to quarters until we get this cleared up."

"Aye, aye sir." He cleared out cat in arms.

"Oh and Tathilan, pass the word. I want anything furry that wanders the ship checked in the lab. And all pets confined to quarters until we track this down."

\*\*Restriction logged and is being disseminated.\*\*

Spacik looked to be brooding. "The question is who?"

Deateli tiskied. "It could be any number of people. Among the ship's cats

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Oscar is popular. I pet her when I see her. She loves the attention."

"So, she could be loaded with micites by any number of people, she wanders the engineering deck and things break. Our saboteur doesn't even need engineering access." Kirk was pacing for a lack of a stylus to tap.

\*\*And she rubs against replicators supplicating for treats when people use them.\*\*

"Tathilan, that explains the observed details, but doesn't tell us who."

\*\*Yes it does. I just have to check the sensor logs for anyone that has petted Oscar in the last 20 hours that wasn't Lt. Freeman.\*\*

"And?"

\*\*One of them loaded the Micites.\*\*

Felialan got up from the floor. \*\*I'm sending all the furry engineers we have up for a sweep, and recheck their quarters, and the briefing room. No more malfunctions.\*\*

Felialan reported to Kirk later. \*\*We found two micites crawling in the briefing room table, nothing damaged. Just about everyone with fur was infested with the things, except Lt. Dentel, He doesn't like cats, and the feeling is mutual.\*\*

Kirk shook his head. \*\*Everyone is clear of the things now?\*

\*\*Yes sir. Engineering and quarters were reswept. A few micites were found, again no damage. They are remarkably stupid about finding a target. Sir, are you going to ban pets from the working spaces?\*

\*\*No, no I don't see that it's required. We will take care of the real threat, not punish the whole ship. The ship's cats are popular. They are an important part of the ship's morale.\*\*

Cmd Spacik went through the sensor files with Tathilan. They had a dozen people that spent time petting Oscar. Spacik stopped the scan. "That one. He has something in his hand."

Tathilan zoomed in on the object and changed the point of view. \*\*It looks like some kind of brush. Let me correlate with the comm badge data. That would be Ensign Samuel Marko, Mr. Spacik. One of our recent transfers."

"Where is he currently?"

\*\*Sleeping in his cabin.\*\*

"That is convenient, I want two security quads to meet me outside Mr. Marko's door."

Minutes later Cmd. Spacik and his security were outside the door in question. Spacik entered his command override code. "I want the entry quiet, no noise, no shouting. He is currently sleeping let us not wake him until we are where we want to be. Tathilan, does he have any personal weapons?"

\*\*The room is clear of weapons Commander.\*\*

Spacik nodded as the door slid open. He allowed security to enter first and he followed. Marko was sleeping soundly. Once everyone was in position Egn Summer poked his foot. "Lights up."

Marko jerked awake, stunned in place by the show of arms.

Spacik looked at him. "You are under arrest. It is strongly suggested that you cooperate."

Marko stared at the phasers. "I have nothing."

Spacik turned to his security chief. Lt Meyers, physically search the room. It was swept once and nothing was found. Make sure that things are found this time.

----

Kirk looked at the sensor file. "Ensign Marko." He eyed the brush in the clear plastic box.

"Yes Capitan, he was clearly observed petting Oscar with that brush. We found the brush in his quarters, loaded with Micites. The brush is a machine to manufacture the devices."

"Mr. Spacik how did we miss the brush the first time?"

"A classic case of misdirection Capitan. When Marko's quarters were searched the device was in a large tacinite chest. Tacinite blocks scans. It was opened and scanned the first time, but the fact of the secret compartment in the lid was not considered. A more aggressive physical search of the box located the fact that the top was not solid as one might assume. It was necessary to break the lid. Ensign Marko would not open it.

"We need to have a word with our security then. Not too harsh a word, but a word."

Miritath nodded. "Consider it handled."

"Now, Mr. Marko himself."

Miritath sighed. "He has refused to make a statement, his right."

"Then I need everyone to log your reports and lock the sensor files, and physical evidence for the Justice Advocate General at Starbase 424. I shall do the same for mine. It will be up to JAG to sort it all out. We will return to Green level internal sensors. That should make you happy Rich."

"Tim, I just don't like it, it makes my neck itch."

Kirk smiled. "That speaks of a misspent youth."

"And very well misspent I'll have you know."

Kirk turned to his XO. "Mr. Spacik I wish to commend you on a job well done. You managed to bring this matter to a head and solve it with minimum disruption to the ship."

"I am no better than those I work with sir."

"I expected you to say no less. Well. I think we are entitled to get back to enjoying our new ship. And Felialan you can tell Mr. Freeman his cat is

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welcome in engineering again."

The Little Foxes -- Garry Stahl, February 2011

*This story started as part of another one. When I realized I was developing two different plots I split it off. Thanks to my Son and my Wife for the pieces that brought this tale together. My son suggested the pet and my Wife that Felialan got some on her. via the pet. It brought a very loose plot to a head.*