

“FALLEN HEROES”

by Alex Lampe

PART I – CHAPTER II

Ever since Station A-12 went to red alert, Captain Stephan Rinckes and his First Officer Commander Melanie Simons have been striding through the corridors, dodging the occasional armed Altonoid. By now, Captain Rinckes has come up with a plan. “We must find a communications station, because our combadges don’t work. Must be the Altonoids’ doing.”

“And we should get some weaponry,” Cmdr. Simons replies, as she brushes a few strands of blonde hair away from her eyes.

“That won’t hurt...” Captain Rinckes says. When he sees that his First Officer is raising an eyebrow at him, he continues with a sheepish, “Well, it won’t hurt us.”

Cmdr. Simons shakes her head.

“There should be a weapons locker up ahead,” Captain Rinckes continues. And indeed, there is a weapons locker up ahead where the corridor ends in a T-junction. They head for it, but just when they’re about to reach it, they see it’s being guarded by an Altonoid. This one looks like any other Altonoid soldier: tall, strong, adorned with multiple tattoos and piercings, and equipped with a rather huge hairdo that covers parts of his grumpy face. Luckily, he doesn’t spot the two Starfleet officers.

Captain Rinckes and Cmdr. Simons quickly hide themselves behind the corner. “Alright,” Captain Rinckes says calmly. “What do we do now?”

Cmdr. Simons says nothing, plucks one of the three rank pips off her collar, and throws it at the bulkhead behind the Altonoid. The pip makes a ticking sound when it bounces off the bulkhead and hits the floor. The Altonoid soldier looks down and inadvertently gives Captain Rinckes all the time he needs to run over to him. The distracted Altonoid looks up too late to prevent himself from being kicked in the stomach; he slams into the bulkhead behind him and collapses.

“We’re quite a team, aren’t we?” Cmdr. Simons says playfully as she walks over to her Captain. The Captain replies with a brief hint of a smile, and he opens the weapons locker to grab its contents: a handphaser and a heavy phaser rifle. He gives the handphaser to Cmdr. Simons, who in turn gives him a very punishing look. Captain Rinckes swiftly gives her the phaser rifle and takes back the handphaser. Simons nods approvingly, with a teasing smile on her face. “Wise move, Captain.”

Rinckes wants to reply to that, but thinks better of it and walks off. Simons follows, holding her newly gained phaser rifle steady in her hands.

In the command center of the station, now completely run by Altonoids:

“A weapons locker near guard DE-47 has been opened,” says an Altonoid who has taken the security station.

“Odd. We do not use Starfleet weaponry,” says another Altonoid, who has seated himself in the Captain’s chair. “Contact that guard. Ask him what’s going on.”

“Yes sir.” A moment of silence passes. “He’s not responding.”

The commanding Altonoid furrows his brow. “Captain Rinckes and his First Officer are still at large?” He doesn’t wait for an answer. “I think we’ve just found them. Send a security team to intercept them.”

The two *Explory*-class and two *Altonoid*-class Altonoid vessels close in on the *USS Wolf*, *USS Kennedy* and *USS Sundance*, which assume attack formation.

The two *Altonoid*-class ships break formation. This class of ships has a very distinct look, because it consists of two large saucers that are connected to each other via a ‘hallway’-

section. That hallway-section contains a very powerful weapon, reminiscent of the plasma weapon the Romulans used over a century ago in a cat-and-mouse game with the *Enterprise*. The Altonoids never mentioned the original name of their weapon, so, for the lack of a better term, Starfleet officers began dubbing it the 'spaceblaster'.

One of those vessels now faces the *Kennedy* and loads its spaceblaster. The *USS Kennedy* responds by firing a barrage of quantum torpedoes, which hit the loading spaceblaster dead-on, decreasing the shields of that Altonoid ship immensely. The subsequent explosions of more impacting quantum torpedoes knock the spaceblaster off-line. The two saucers still contain weaponry, but with its spaceblaster out of the way, the ship is no match for the *Kennedy*.

Onboard the *USS Sundance*:

The first weapon impacts from the other *Altonoid*-class vessel rock the bridge. The Bolian Lieutenant Broitz looks nervous as he takes in the sight of the double-saucered enemy ship. He knows the *Sundance* has one great tactical advantage, and it's about time he put it to good use. "Initiate multi-vector assault mode!"

"*Initiating decoupling sequence,*" the computer replies. The ship goes to blue alert, which is emphasized by the fact that the pillars on the bridge, as well as the bridge dome on the ceiling, start blinking blue light. "*Auto-separation in ten seconds.*"

As the computer counts down to zero, Lt. Broitz fails to notice that the Altonoid ship that was attacking them only moments ago has ceased firing. He also fails to notice that its spaceblaster is emitting green light that steadily grows brighter and brighter by the second.

"*Separation sequence in progress,*" the computer announces, moments before the bridge shudders briefly but firmly. The *Sundance* separates into three battle-ready sections: its saucer (which contains the bridge and most of the crew), the upper secondary hull, and the lower secondary hull.

"Initiate attack pattern Alpha," Lt. Broitz says with as much confidence as he can muster.

"*Specify target.*"

"Holy crap!" he exclaims, when he finally notices that the Altonoid ship is mere seconds away from firing its formidable spaceblaster.

"*That is not a valid target.*"

The startled Broitz jumps up from his chair and points a shaking finger at the viewscreen. "The Altonoid ship! Target the Altonoid ship!"

That's all the information the ship's computer needs. The saucer and lower secondary hull maneuver away from the middle section, which engages full impulse and heads straight for the Altonoid vessel. However, said vessel unleashes its spaceblaster and fires what seems like a giant green orb made of devastating energy. The inevitable impact is huge and causes the middle section to lose its shields and sustain heavy damage. It has gained enough momentum to keep going, drifting out of control towards its opponent. The slowly maneuvering Altonoid ship tries to move out of the way, but it's too late. The drifting section hits the Altonoid ship at full speed and explodes in its shields. That blast shatters the hallway-section, turning the one Altonoid ship into two half Altonoid ships.

"We've performed an unwanted saucer separation on them, sir!" Lt. Jena Roguez, manning the tactical station, says. "We've also knocked out their shields, and blew many of their important systems off-line."

"That makes them easy targets. It's like a shooting gallery," Lt. Broitz says. He forces a smile, carefully neglecting to dwell on the fact that he has just lost one third of the *Sundance*.

Lt. Roguez, however, has a casualty report ready. "When we lost the middle section, we lost thirty-eight crewmembers." There's definitely an accusing tone hidden in her voice.

"I know, Lieutenant..." Broitz says as he sits down in the Captain's chair. "Let's not think

about that for now.”

“The Captain’s not going to like this.”

Broitz wipes a bit of sweat from his forehead. “Look, he left me in command. Just keep firing at the Altonoid ship.”

Lt. Roguez does just that, and she commands both remaining sections of the *Sundance* to continue their attack on the two Altonoid saucers.

In the meanwhile the *USS Kennedy* has seriously damaged the other *Altonoid*-class ship, and deals the last blow in the form of a dozen photon torpedoes that rip open the hull of the starboard saucer and make it explode in a huge blast a few seconds later. The resulting explosions are large enough to consume the left saucer as well.

Those combined blasts provide enough momentum to send the remains of the ship hurling towards an *Explory-class* ship the *USS Wolf* is trying to deal with. The large, beam-shaped *Explory-class* vessel fires its starboard phaser arrays in an attempt to destroy the large, burning hulk, and only manages to break it in two. Those two large pieces hit the upper and lower side of the large Altonoid ship, smashing through the shields and scraping the hull armor and external devices, such as weapons and sensors, off their foundations. The damaged *Explory-class* vessel gets embraced and consumed by the remains of the *Altonoid-class* vessel, and starts drifting too, into the direction of the second *Explory-class* ship...

That ship initiates full impulse in a futile attempt to escape the lingering destruction. Once again, they can’t get out of the way in time, and the aft of the *Explory-class* vessel gets hit by the remains of its colleagues. The ship careens out of control, only to be greeted by a fatal salvo of photon torpedoes originating from the *USS Wolf*.

Onboard the *USS Kennedy*:

The Trill Lieutenant Malin scratches her head and is unable to hide a trickle of surprise in her voice when she says, “That was foolish of them. I mean, we outgunned them and all, but this was just... way too easy.”

Sven Muntenaar, the black-haired Lieutenant who’s sitting next to her, tries to ignore the quick victory and stays alert. “The *USS Sundance* reports the destruction of the last *Altonoid-class* ship. Now we can focus on the situation aboard the station.”

“The shield that prevents beaming is still in place. I don’t think there’s much we can do from here,” the Chief Engineer, Lt. Cmdr. Soeteman, says.

“We’ll have to destroy it somehow,” Lt. Appels says. The short, but muscular Lieutenant rarely loses his cool, but he can appear a bit trigger-happy during times like these.

“First we will have to know where that shield array is located, Lieutenant,” says the Vulcan Lt. Sivar, who’s still sitting in the Captain’s chair.

“We’re receiving a message from the station,” Lt. Muntenaar says. “It’s being sent to all ships.”

Onboard the *USS Wolf*:

“Well, put it on screen, Stephanie,” Lt. Cmdr. Leif Anderson says. He sits in the Captain’s chair of the *Akira-class Wolf* as if he’s been sitting there all his life. “We are the lead ship of the fleet; we should deal with all communications.”

“Yes sir,” Lt. Stephanie Grant says. *No need to recite Starfleet regulations to me*, she adds in thought.

Captain Rinckes appears on the viewscreen, with a corridor of Station A-12 in the background. The Captain of the *Sundance* looks ruffled. “Finally!” he exclaims. “We’re probably being tracked down as we speak, so I’ll keep things short.”

“Captain Rinckes, I presume?” Lt. Cmdr. Anderson asks.

“Yes. Captain Rinckes.” The Captain makes no effort to hide his impatience. “The Altonoids have taken over the station. We’ve been running from the Altonoids for a while now. I thought you’d like to be inform---”

“Captain, the Altonoids have raised some kind of shield that prevents beaming and combadge usage,” Lt. Cmdr. Anderson says. “As long as that shield is up, we can’t help you.”

“We’ve found the location of the shield emitter,” Ensign Daniels says, manning the science station. “It’s located on deck 54, near section Beta 12.”

“Alright, I got that,” Rinckes says. “That’s not far from here. And t---”

“You must destroy or disable that system by any means necessary,” Lt. Cmdr. Anderson says urgently.

“Say, who’s the Captain here?” Captain Rinckes says. Before he can continue asking rhetorical questions, he gets interrupted by Commander Simons, who runs past him. She’s shooting at something that’s invisible for the bridge crew.

“We’ve got to leave NOW!” they hear Cmdr. Simons shout.

Captain Rinckes grabs his phaser and starts shooting in the same direction. “You heard the lady,” he says gruffly, right before he runs away too. Only a few seconds later, several Altonoids run past view. One Altonoid halts and looks right into the ‘camera’, showing his unpleasant face to the bridge crew.

“Hello...?” Lt. Cmdr. Anderson says, looking at the ugly Altonoid. “I am Lieu---”

The Altonoid grabs his phaser and shoots the ‘camera’.

Now that the connection is terminated, the viewscreen shows the Federation logo in peaceful silence. “Well...” Lt. Cmdr. Anderson says as he looks around for a brief, awkward moment. “Now it all depends on Captain Rinckes and Commander Simons...”

An Altonoid phaser beam narrowly misses Captain Rinckes and destroys an LCARS display on a nearby bulkhead, as he and Cmdr. Melanie Simons are running through the corridors in an attempt to shake off the four Altonoids that are pursuing them.

Suddenly, Captain Rinckes turns around to face the Altonoids, causing him to evade a phaser beam that would’ve hit him in the back if he hadn’t turned around. He aims his phaser, shoots one Altonoid, and turns around again, barely missing even more incoming phaser fire.

They’re both running as fast as they can. Despite that, the Altonoids keep gaining on them. Just when they’re about to run out of options, Rinckes spots an open entrance to one of this station’s many computer rooms. He guides himself and his First Officer inside, opens a wall panel near the doorway and rips out some circuitry, fusing the heavy door behind them shut.

After a quick sigh of relief, they notice that there are two doors in front of them now. “Two ways to get to the shield emitter,” Captain Rinckes says. “Door number one or door number two. Which one do we choose?”

“We must separate. It’ll increase our chances of success,” Cmdr. Simons says.

“Easy for you to say...” Captain Rinckes smiles when he looks at his own handphaser and Melanie Simons’ somewhat more impressive phaser rifle. When he looks his First Officer in the eyes, he instantly regains his seriousness. “I’d rather stay with you.”

She doesn’t pick up on his sudden caring attitude. “We don’t have time for a discussion. They can break through the door any second now.” And with that, she walks towards the right door. “I’ll meet you there, okay?”

Captain Rinckes doesn’t like this situation one bit. He doesn’t want to let her out of his sights, not under these dangerous conditions. However, he knows that the mission should come first. “Okay,” he says, with reluctance.

Cmdr. Simons leaves and the door closes behind her, leaving Rinckes to stare at the closed door for a brief while. A series of loud clangs made by the Altonoids in an attempt to break through the heavy door makes him realize he’s got to get out of here quickly. Without further

hesitation, he goes through the left door and carries on with his mission. He's got to find that shield array before it's too late.

Through the large window of the main conference hall, the hostages plus the Altonoids guarding them can see the triumphant Federation starships facing the debris of the Altonoid vessels. The four captured Starfleet officers (Admiral Van Aken, Commander Levine, Captain Duvivier and Commander Jansen) witnessed the entire battle and can now see the *USS Satellite* warping in.

"Why don't you give up, Letor Fune?" Admiral Van Aken asks. "Your fleet has been destroyed, while our fleet has grown even bigger. Surrender now; we're still willing to continue negotiations."

"We have no reason for concern. Our reinforcements will arrive shortly," Letor Fune says.

Commander Levine can no longer remain silent. "Stop this, Fune! Before we go beyond the point of no return, which will result in open warfare!"

Fune just keeps staring at the large window...

Captain Rinckes marches down a corridor, evades a group of Altonoids, and enters a square room. Seven armed-to-the-teeth Altonoids enter the room from the opposite side!

"What's that?!" one of them shouts, pointing ahead.

"Relax, Guz. That's what humans call a Jefferies tube..." another Altonoid says. "You know, we have crawlways on our ships and stations too." This makes the other Altonoids laugh.

"I really thought I saw something."

"You are seeing ghosts, Guz. Those two Starfleet officers Fune 'misplaced' can't be here. They wouldn't have gotten this far."

"Don't underestimate us," Captain Rinckes whispers to himself. He managed to dive into that Jefferies tube not a second too soon, and now he's crawling his way forward.

At the end of the tunnel, the Captain readies his phaser and opens the hatch. Some containers are stacked close to the exit, so Rinckes can hide behind them without being seen. He slowly peeks his head up and sees a rather bulky Altonoid device sitting in the center of what appears to be a small cargo bay. That must be the shield array. Though it's being guarded by at least a dozen Altonoids, the Captain is happy to have found the generator so quickly. "That science Ensign from the *Wolf* deserves a compliment," Rinckes whispers to himself. "Now, how do I destroy that shield array?"

Captain Rinckes looks at his phaser and comes up with a nice idea. He sets the phaser to overload and throws it at the shield array. Quickly, he jumps back into the Jefferies tube, carefully closes its hatch, and crawls away at a breakneck pace. The handphaser hits the shield array, bounces off of it, and lands on the floor. A nearby Altonoid walks over to the fallen phaser and picks it up. Before he realizes what's going on, the handphaser explodes...

The station rocks and the lights flicker, distracting Letor Fune from a conversation with another Altonoid in the conference room. Fune curses in his Altonoid language. Luckily, the universal translator doesn't pick that one up... Once Fune has regained his composure, he asks, "What's going on?!"

The Altonoid that Letor Fune was talking to runs over to a nearby wall panel. "The shield array has been destroyed! It must be Captain Rinckes' doing. Or..."

"Rinckes again? I hate that guy," Letor Fune grunts.

"Take a number..." Captain Duvivier sighs. Nobody hears him.

“At least this area is still shielded,” says the Altonoid near the wall panel. “Good of us to have that back-up plan. I don’t think they’ll be able to find that second generator. We made sure it’s hidden very well.”

“Didn’t we know where they are?” Letor Fune is obviously displeased. “Didn’t we have their location when they opened the weapons locker? And when they sent a message to the *USS Wolf*?”

“We don’t know where they are now. We’ve lost track of them.”

“We outnumber them a million to one and you can’t find them?!” Letor Fune shouts. “Find them! Find them and bring them to me!” Fune lifts his index finger and his voice turns ominous. “And if you cannot capture them alive, kill them.” He turns and faces the four Starfleet officers. “You don’t happen to know where Captain Rinckes might be, do you, fellows?” he asks with feigned kindness.

“May I make a suggestion?” Captain Duvivier asks calmly. “I think he’s headed for the shuttle bay right now, with his tail tucked between his legs.”

Admiral Van Aken gives Duvivier the most punishing look in human history.

Onboard the *USS Wolf*:

“Captain Rinckes and Commander Simons have made it!” Lt. Stephanie Grant cheers.

“Made what?” Lt. Cmdr. Anderson says, without looking up from a PADD that was just handed to him. The *Wolf* suffered only minor damage during the surprisingly short skirmish with the Altonoids, and the repairs are coming along nicely.

“The shield! It’s down!” Lt. Grant says. But her happiness disappears quickly. “Oh... The Altonoids have raised a new shield around the conference room. We still can’t beam the hostages out.”

Ensign Daniels shakes his head. “I’m sorry, I can’t find the location of this second shield array. I think they’ve jammed its power source.”

“But we can now send troops!” Lt. Cmdr. Anderson says, his enthusiasm building up again. He presses a button on his chair’s armrest. “This is the bridge to Lieutenant Hoper. Are your Security officers standing by?”

“*I thought you’d never ask,*” Hoper replies in his dark and raspy voice.

“Are we going to release the hostages by force?” Lt. Grant asks loudly enough to be heard by Lt. Hoper.

“*Negative. That would put the flag officers at too much risk. We must take that second shield generator down, so we can simply beam them to safety.*”

“Agreed,” Cmdr. Andersen replies. “Assemble your troops and commence beam-down. Bridge out.” He looks around for a brief moment before continuing. “We should be able to contact Rinckes, now that the first shield is gone.” He presses his combadge. “Commander Anderson to Captain Rinckes.”

“Yes?” they hear.

“You did it!” Anderson says. “Congratulations, sir.”

“*I know,*” Captain Rinckes replies. “*I assume you will send in troops now.*”

“That’s right. But they’ve raised a new shield around the hostage room. You must find it and destroy it. We don’t know where it is. Frankly, it could be anywhere.”

“*Hmm...*” they hear Rinckes ponder out loud. “*I’ll look for it.*”

“Okay... Is Commander Simons still with you?”

“*We’ve split up. I’m searching for her now.*”

“Alright, but if I may be so bold, the conference room shielding is our top priority.”

“*Thank you for reminding me...*” The sarcasm drips from his voice. “*Rinckes out.*”

“Bye, Captain,” Anderson says. “Good luck.” He turns to Lt. Grant after the comm channel has closed. “He’s not exactly the cheery type, is he?”

Grant just shrugs and continues her work.

On the bridge of the *USS Kennedy*:

“Lieutenant Appels, have your troops ready to beam down to the station,” Lt. Sivar says.

“Already doing it,” Lt. Appels says, sending messages throughout the ship via his tactical station. “We’ll give the Altonoids a hell of a warm welcome.”

“Permission to come along, Lieutenant,” Lt. Malin asks.

“We could use all the help we can get,” Lt. Appels admits.

Lieutenant Sivar raises a disapproving eyebrow. “You’re needed at the helm, Ms. Malin.”

“I never get to do anything fun,” Lt. Malin says half-jokingly.

“Believe me...” Lt. Appels says, as he opens a weapons locker and arms himself. “War is not fun. I can remember the Dominion war all too well... I think we all can.” Nobody’s paying attention to him, because they’re all looking at the centre of the bridge.

None other than Q and Tony Q have appeared on the bridge, apparently from out of nowhere. They both look disgruntled.

The self-acclaimed ‘god-like’ Q is infamous for his frequent visits to several Starfleet vessels, including this *USS Kennedy*. Except for one very brief stint as a human, he has always been a Q, and always will be. Tony Q, though, is a completely different story. He used to be a human called Tony Blue, until he was chosen by the Q Continuum to successfully introduce human nature to the powerful but arrogant Continuum. While neither fully Q nor human anymore, he served Starfleet aboard this ship, the *USS Kennedy*. Due to mysterious circumstances (being sponsored by a race of omnipotent beings can be beneficial sometimes), he rose to the rank of Commander, despite being only 18 years old. He has used his powers to save the Federation on several occasions and has become a respectable, if not a bit odd, Starfleet officer.

Recently, Tony Q became a full Q and gave up his role in Starfleet. With his rather youthful age, he may not exactly look like a typical Commander, but he surely doesn’t lack the self-confidence, or arrogance, if you prefer... Now he stands in the middle of the bridge, with his arms crossed. “I’ve made up my mind, Q!”

“Reconsider! It’s not worth it!” Q retorts. “Let the Federation take care of themselves.”

“They need my help! They’ll never succeed without me.” Tony can’t help but sound more like a spoiled teenager than the robust, brave war hero he’s trying to be.

“Look, we’ve been through this! Enough is enough. You’re a Q now. You have responsibilities to the Continuum. I know these humans are an important part of your history, but if the Continuum tells you to back off...” Q uncharacteristically drops his melodramatic demeanor, and appears almost frightened when he says, “...you back off!”

“I’ve made the decision, Q.” Tony Q snaps his fingers. A heavy phaser rifle appears in his hands.

“The Continuum won’t allow this disobedience. They’ll reduce your powers, or worse...”

Tony doesn’t say a word and looks at Q with a determined look on his face.

“Alright! Fine!” Q shouts. “Have it your way, Commander Tony *Blue*! But don’t come crying to me for help when things get out of hand!” And with that, Q disappears in a white flash.

Tony Q looks at the bridge crew, who all stare at him in stunned silence. “What?!”

Lt. Sivar stands up from his chair and walks over to Tony. “It appears you have decided to assist our attempt to recapture the station.”

Tony Q sighs dramatically. “Well yes! You might say that!”

“And I assume the Q Continuum is not pleased with that,” Lt. Sivar says.

Tony looks at Dr. Rose Van Oers. “I didn’t know Lieutenant Sivar had such well-developed telepathic abilities,” he says, making the Doctor smile.

Lieutenant Appels decides to join the conversation. "Alright, Tony. If you want to help us, resolve the situation by a snap of the fingers."

Tony snaps his fingers, but nothing happens, as expected... "They took away my powers..." he groans. "But I'm undoubtedly still immortal. The continuum can't afford to lose me."

"Alright, you can come along, Commander," Appels says with slight reluctance. "One thing needs to be absolutely clear: once we're down there, I'm in command of the squad, understood?"

"Yeah, sure." Tony's lackluster reply doesn't really ease Lt. Appels' mind...

"Now that their primary shield is gone, the scanners indicate there are many dead or injured Starfleet officers on the station," Lt. Muntenaar says. "The Altonoids didn't take over the station the nice way..."

"Indeed, Mr. Muntenaar. Their orders are to shoot anyone below the rank of Commander, or anyone who wears a security or engineering uniform," Lt. Sivar says.

"Maybe we should all wear command uniforms with the rank insignia of a Commander?" a nearby Ensign says.

Lt. Appels lets out an annoyed sigh. "No, Ensign Parkin. That will result in a change of orders for the Altonoids, making them shoot every Commander in sight..." He takes a long look at Commander Tony Q, who gives him a haughty look in return. "Actually, it might be worth a try," Appels sighs.

"Very funny, Lieutenant," Tony replies. "I'd expected a bit more sympathy, even from you. I'm risking a lot to just be here and to help you. At least you can try to appear grateful."

Lt. Appels is not impressed and replies with a stern, "I'll thank you once this situation is resolved." Tony wants to retort, but Appels cuts him short by saying, "We've wasted enough time."

"Very well..." Tony mutters.

Lt. Appels doesn't hear him. Instead, he faces the Doctor and says, "Doctor Van Oers, please join my away team. They'll undoubtedly require medical assistance at the station."

"Now, that's not a very optimistic of you, Appels," Tony says. "Do you always take such poor care of your away teams? Things have really changed since I left."

Lieutenant Appels sighs. "I was talking about the crew of Statio---"

"I know, I know," Tony says. "Let's go now. We've wasted enough time."

Lt. Appels wants to say something impolite, but Dr. Van Oers gently coerces him to the turbolift. Commander Tony Q follows.

A few minutes later, the trio plus six Security officers materialize in a corridor of the station.

"Right now, multiple troops are beaming in from our ships. I am our squad leader," Lt. Appels says.

"How do you do?" Cmdr. Tony Q says as he takes a bow. "Enough kidding around, I am well informed. We've got to find the shield array that generates the shield around the hostage room." Tony says that last sentence like he has repeated it a billion times before.

"And I shall attempt to patch up every injured Starfleet officer we encounter," Dr. Van Oers says, genuinely optimistic as always.

"Yes. Alright. Our team will have to search deck 52," Lt. Appels says. "Commander? Are you listening?"

Tony Q breaks off his exchange of smiles with an attractive, brown-haired, female Security Ensign that's part of their team. "Sorry, you were saying?"

Lt. Appels sighs. "Let's go find that array." The group leaves the area with phaser rifles ready.

Onboard the *USS Kennedy*:

“Away teams have all checked in and have begun their search,” says Ensign Parkin, who now mans the tactical station.

“I’m reading a funny...” Lt. Muntenaar says, but after a quizzical look from Lt. Sivar he corrects himself, “a *peculiar* signal emerging from right in front of us.”

“I see it too,” Lt. Malin adds.

Muntenaar’s look quickly changes from quizzical to alarmed. “It’s an Altonoid ship uncloaking right in front of us!”

A strange looking variant of the huge, rectangular *Massal*-class appears on the screen. Its entire surface seems to be covered by yellow wiring. The wiring lights up at random points, until they converge to form four strong phaser beams that immediately start pounding on the shields of the *USS Satellite*.

“Fascinating,” Lt. Sivar says, with a frown on his face. “Ensign Parkin, ready weapons.”