

FROM THE AVENGER LOGS...

## LET THE FUR FLY!!

### AN AVENGER COMEDY

By Heidi Barnes and Kathy Nielson

"Don't move."

The little creature backed into the corner as the large predator loomed closer. A large paw reached out for the scared animal and plucked it out of its little niche behind the storage crates.

"Got ya."

The little critter squirmed as much as it could, but escape was futile; the predator's grip was too tight. The last thing it remembered, before passing out from fright, was that it was heading toward another large predator which had already begun eating.

"Dinner is s-served." Lt. Cmdr. Chaym Re'ming'ton grinned as she held up the small furry rodent in her paw. She sat down next to Lt. Sasha Graevyn, who had just begun her dinner.

"I still don't see why you didn't catch a meal," commented Chaym. "A freshly killed meal is *always* better than that replicated stuff. I swear Star Fleet Intelligence has 'tamed' you."

Sasha looked up at Chaym with a slightly annoyed expression. This discussion had gotten old over the past week.

"I *told* you, Chaym. S.F.I. has not 'tamed' me; it has made me appreciate a variety of foods," retorted Sasha. "Besides, nothing beats a good Filet Mignon."

"I'll tell ya what beats that," replied Chaym sinisterly. "A 'steak' made from a freshly dispatched Terran *cat*."

Sasha glared at Chaym. "I thought I made it clear I didn't want to hear about your cannibalistic practices," she growled, flinging a spoonful of mashed potatoes at Chaym.

"Okay, Okay," said Chaym, licking the potatoes off her muzzle.

"Besides, I'm tired of chasing after my food. It takes too much time," added Sasha in a calmer tone.

"Lazy," murmured Chaym, just loud enough for Sasha to hear. Sasha shot her a nasty look, but instead of saying anything she took another bite of her steak.

"Ya know, I've been thinking," said Sasha. "We'll never get a chance to run the ship. It would take one hell of an event to incapacitate all the people who outrank us."

Chaym looked at Sasha quizzically, wondering where this topic had materialized from. She decided to continue with it, figuring that returning to the previous one might not be that good of an idea.

"Well, at least *you* have a remote chance," commented Chaym. "Ya! Chief of Recreation. Like they would ever let *me* command."

"At least you've led landing parties before," replied Sasha.

An uneasy quiet settled over the hanger bay. Sasha took a few more bites of her steak while Chaym tore into her prey. Slowly a smile formed on Sasha's muzzle. "Hey, I have an idea..."

Ever so slowly, the hanger bay faded into blackness.

**"Darn, I was hoping for the ripple effect."**

**"No, the ripple effect is used only for flashbacks. Now be quiet."**

**"Oh. Sorry."**

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**"Captain's Log, Stardate 9301.22:**

**En route to Garius IV to deliver monitoring equipment to the observation base located there. We expect..."**

"Captain," interrupted Ensign Rhea, "incoming coded message for you from Star Fleet."

Vice Admiral Alexander Rosenzweig turned to Rhea. "I'll take it in my Ready Room." Alex rose and headed for the rear of the bridge.

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Alex sat down in his chair and called up the message on his monitor. The Federation logo was quickly replaced by a very staticky image of Vice Admiral Nielson.

"Admiral."

"Admiral Alexander, <snap> good to see you."

"Is there something wrong, Admiral?" asked Alex, thoughts already coming to mind of some terrible disaster. Why else would they send this type of message? The image looked at Alex with a small smile forming across her lips.

"No need to worry, Alexander," she replied, as he realized his thoughts must have been visible on his face. "There is no *dire* emergency. In fact, what I have to tell you is far from devastating...well, maybe. It all depends on how you view it."

Alex leaned a little closer, his interest definitely piqued.

"Star Fleet," the small blonde woman continued, "has been viewing the records of various ships' crews and found <crackle> some problems. Star Fleet has therefore devised a new recurring training program to keep <snap> field officers current on exploratory mission procedures. Your ship, if you'll pardon the expression, will <pop> be our first Guinea Pig." The image of the Admiral began to fade in and out. No matter what Alex tried, he couldn't get the transmission any clearer. **So much for modern technology**, he thought to himself.

"Yes sir. I'll ready my Command Staff immediately."

"I don't think you understand, Admiral," intoned the Vice Admiral. "You will be expected to beam down to Matri III with *all* your key officers."

"May I ask why, sir?" questioned Alex. This discussion was getting stranger, and he still couldn't clear the transmission.

"During emergency situations, certain members of the crew have appeared to be lacking in..."

"Excuse me, sir," interrupted Alex, taking this as a personal attack. "My crew is one of Star Fleet's finest. They'd..."

"Please, don't interrupt," snapped Nielson. "I was not implying negligence on anyone's part. As I was saying, they *appear* to be lacking. Through no fault of their own, they were just among the

unfortunate few not to be updated on recent procedures. This new technique will have all key officers aboard a ship trained concurrently, to avoid the possibility of delays in scheduling which could lead to this present lack of efficiency."

Alex listened to all this, but no matter how he looked at it, he still felt that he and his crew were being personally insulted. He leaned back in his chair, realizing that getting angry about it wasn't going to help.

"Question, sir?"

"Go ahead," she replied.

"With all key officers down on the training mission, who will take charge of the Avenger?" asked Alex, hoping this might get either him or Bill out of this mission/nightmare.

The Admiral began sifting through some data padds on her desk.

"After considerable deliberation over the personnel files of your crew, we feel that Lt. Cmdr. Re'ming'ton will be aptly suited for the job." A dead silence fell over the Ready Room, Alex momentarily shocked over what was just said.

"Permission to speak freely, sir?" replied Alex, intending to end this bizarre turn of events before it got any further.

"Denied."

"Then just one thing, sir," Alex quickly added. "We were en route to Garius IV to deliver monitoring equipment. Suggest you send another ship to carry out our mission. **If they won't let me protest Chaym's command of my ship, I'll at least keep her in orbit where I can 'keep an eye on her'.**"

"That will not be necessary," replied the Admiral. "We feel that Lt. Cmdr. Re'ming'ton will be capable of continuing the mission during your training."

"But, sir..."

"That will be all, Alexander," intoned the Admiral in a voice that clearly stated this discussion was ended.

Alex turned off the monitor and stared at the wall.

"Oh, boy," he mumbled, placing his head in his hands. This was not turning out to be a good day.

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Chaym entered the dimly lit Ready Room. Alex stood at the far end, flipping through the pages of a novel he had received on his last birthday. He indicated for her to sit down. She sat down in the nearest chair, sensing that Alex was not in a very good mood. He cleared his throat and closed the book. He looked at Chaym, who was apparently trying to hold back a smile—which, for a lupine, was quite a task in itself—and sighed.

"I have just received a message from Star Fleet. We've been ordered to take part in a new training program. I and all key officers will be involved in this program." Alex stopped, taking a deep breath. "And apparently I have been ordered to place you in command of the Avenger while I'm gone." There. He'd said it...but the uneasy feeling in his stomach didn't go away.

Alex looked up at Chaym, a full blown smile on her face.

"Commander, this is *not* humorous," he stated, dreading this event more and more with each passing moment.

"I *never* said it was...sir," replied Chaym, her smile increasing at Alex's obvious discomfort.

"While we are away," continued Alex as he walked over to the replicator hoping to get something to ease the sinking feeling form-

ing in his stomach, "you will proceed with our current mission to Garius IV and deliver the monitoring equipment."

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Sasha sat on her bed looking over a recent geological journal while Kris Ragan filled her in on the latest gossip.

"...and then he came back for another girl, can you believe it?!"

"With him, to be honest, I'm not surprised. Last time..." Sasha stopped.

"What is it, Sasha?" asked Kris.

Sasha stared transfixed. "It's Chaym," she replied. Kris just sat and waited. She hated not being in on a conversation, but she knew Sasha would tell her in a minute what Chaym was saying.

After a few minutes, Sasha blinked, looked at Kris, and smiled. "Phase one has been successfully completed."

Kris grinned.

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"...to prevent any future lack in efficiency," finished Alex, still wondering why his ship had been chosen. **Are they trying to tell me something?** He looked around the table at his Command Staff. They in turn looked at each other.

"What type of training mission will it be?" asked Lt. Cmdr. Padovan.

"I've been told that it will be a survival/diplomatic mission, emphasis more on the diplomatic."

The room was filled with a mix of moans and sighs of relief. As the mumbling died down, Alex stood. "Well, if there are no more questions...? You've been given a list of those in your divisions who will be joining us; please inform them as soon as possible. Also prepare any personal gear you may need and be ready to report to Transporter Room 3 at 0700 hours. Dismissed."

As the last of the staff filed out, Lt. Cmdr. DiMaio walked over to Alex. "Admiral?"

"Yes, Commander?"

"If I may ask, who will be in charge of the ship while we are away?"

"Lt. Cmdr. Re'ming'ton," sighed Alex.

"Oh, Alex...I'm sorry."

Alex gave her a weak smile. "Thanks, Judi."

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**Almost done.**

The transporter technician sighed as he looked at the now empty transporter room. He thought they'd never stop coming; every time he'd beam down six, another six would take their place.

**Five more minutes, then my shift is over, he mused. All I want to do is soak my hands in a nice bath.**

"Also, don't forget to..."

**More?** he thought to himself. He looked over, hoping against hope that it was his replacement. It wasn't. Entering the transporter room was VADM Rosenzweig, followed by the Chief of Recreation and the Chief Navigator holding a padd.

"...do you have all that?" asked Alex.

"Yes, sir," replied Sasha as she entered the last of the information.

"Good," he replied as he stepped onto the transporter pad.

"Good luck, sir," added Chaym, looking as innocent as she could. Alex just looked at her. **Why do I feel that I'm going to need it?** he thought to himself.

"I'll see you in *three* days, then," reminded Alex. "Oh, and Chaym...?"

"Yes, sir?" replied Chaym in an overly perky manner.

"Don't blow up my ship."

"Wouldn't think of it, sir."

Alex sighed; this was going to be the longest three days of his life. "Energize," he mumbled.

The technician activated the transporter and Alex slowly dematerialized. He looked over at Chaym and Sasha to see if they needed anything. As soon as Alex disappeared, the two "furries" grinned, sending chills down the technician's spine. As the door shut behind them, he could have sworn he heard a "YES!" followed by laughing. **Forget the bath; I need a drink!** he thought as his replacement came to relieve him.

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"Proceed to Garius IV, warp 2."

Lt. Cmdr. Re'ming'ton smiled; she'd always wanted to say that. She shifted into a more comfortable position in the Captain's chair and looked around. It was currently Alpha shift; Sasha was at Nav, Rhea was at Communications, and Lt. J.G. Joseph Toland was at Helm.

"How long 'til we arrive?" asked Chaym.

"24.5 hours," responded Toland.

"Y'know," commented Sasha, "if we increased speed to warp 3 it would take only about ten hours."

"But, Commander," interrupted Ensign Merritt, "that would be against our orders."

Silence fell over the bridge. All eyes turned from Merritt to Chaym, waiting to hear her response. She sat there staring intently at Merritt.

"Ensign," replied Chaym in a serious tone, "go to your room. And report to me when you have learned the error of your ways."

Shocked, the Ensign left the bridge. Sasha and Toland looked at each other and grinned. Rhea, on the other hand, sighed and returned to her monitoring. **What did I do to deserve this post?** she thought to herself.

"Proceed at warp three," intoned Chaym.

"Yes sir." replied Toland enthusiastically.

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Slowly, his vision cleared as the transport effect faded away. Alex found himself in a small clearing in the midst of a wooded area with the rest of the team. Amongst the crew was scattered various pieces of survival gear and supplies. As he looked over the team, he noted various expressions: anticipation, boredom, nervousness, and a fair amount of annoyance.

"Well, here we are," announced Alex in an attempt to break the silence.

"But where is here?" asked Lt. Commander Carlos Maldonado.

"Wherever you go, there you are," chimed in Capt. Jon Lane as he strolled past Carlos and Cmdr. Bob Fillmore.

Bob looked over to Alex. "Permission to hit him, sir."

"Permission granted."

Bob turned to the slowly retreating John Lane and lightly hit him on the arm.

"Ow," replied Jon, giving the three men his most hurt expression. Alex, suppressing a smile, turned to the rest of the party and began to issue orders.

"Okay, everybody. Let's get rolling."

The rest of the group stopped their casual conversations to listen to their leader.

"Commander Sastrowardoyo, you're in charge of setting up the base camp. Lt. Cmdr. Johnson, you and your group will scout out the northern sector. Lt. Cmdr. DiMaio, take your group south, and Lt. Cmdr. Padovan, you have west. Carlos, Jon, Michael, Brenda, you're with me. We'll take east. Rep..."

"And I shall go this way!" bellowed Lt. Cmdr. Boldstar, as he whipped out his lightsaber and promptly began clearing a three meter wide path through the forest.

"Ah...yes... As I was saying, report back to camp with your findings in two hours. Any questions?" finished Alex.

"Yes...Yes, the Force is strongest in this direction."

"I repeat, any questions?"

Everyone responded in the negative.

"Well, then, let's move out."

"Yes, sir," responded the team with an enthusiasm even they didn't realize they had. Rahadyan began setting his crew to the task of setting up a Base Camp while the four scouting parties went on their way. In a matter of minutes, Alex's team found themselves traipsing through the woods, to grandmother's house they g... <oops; sorry, wrong story. Ahem. Now where were we, hmm...? Oh, yes.> Alex's team was processing easterly through the **forest**. As they walked, Alex began to feel as though he was in the "old South" back on Earth, where a man could walk for days and never see another living soul.

"So, Admiral, any ideas as to what we should expect?" asked Carlos.

"Not rightly sure, Commander," drawled Alex, still thinking about the "old South."

"Hick," mumbled Carlos, unfortunately he realized, loud enough for everyone to hear. "Oh, sorry, sir."

Alex just looked at him. "Anyway," he returned to looking ahead, "the orders didn't specify."

Klufie gave a hollow laugh. "Should we prepare our body bags now?" he asked.

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Chaym positioned herself a little more snugly in the Captain's chair. As she did so, she took in all that was happening on the bridge. Everything was running smoothly, the ship was heading to Garius IV at warp three, the cargo bay was readying itself to beam down the cargo, and she was *in charge of it all*. **I could really get to like this**, she thought to herself. **For the next three days, I'm in charge**. It was then that the idea hit her. **Well then, better make the most of it**. She grinned.

"Bridge to Ensign Mitzi."

"Yes, CAPTAIN!!!" responded a disembodied voice. Chaym smiled. **Captain. Yes, she liked the sound of that**. "Report to the bridge."

"Immediately, SIR!" clipped the voice.

Sasha looked at Chaym with a questioning look on her face, her curiosity piqued. Chaym just smiled, savoring her secret a little longer. Rhea looked upon her "captain" from behind and scowled. Just then, exactly 37.024 seconds after being summoned to the bridge, Ensign Mitzi Mrowr stepped out of the turbo-lift. She walked over to Chaym and gave an extremely overexaggerated salute. "You 'commed' me, sir?"

Chaym stood up from the command chair, tugged on her uniform, cleared her throat, and tried to give the most serious expression she possibly could. "Ensign," she said in a very formal tone. "By the power vested in me, **I like that.** "I hereby place you in charge of Recreation, and expect you to fulfill all the duties of Acting Chief of Recreation."

Mitzi's face beamed. "Orders?"

"I expect you to keep the crew properly entertained."

"Would that mean a party sir?" asked Mitzi as innocently as possible.

"Party?" responded Chaym in a feigned shocked tone. "Did I say party?"

"Oh no, of course not, sir."

"Well, then," continued Chaym as she returned to her chair, "carry on, Ensign."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Mitzi, giving another zealous salute as she headed for the turbo-lift.

"Lt. Graevyn," asked Chaym as she turned to look at the viewer, "estimated time to arrival?"

"Approximately four hours."

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"Admiral, I think I found something."

The rest of Alex's team looked over at Klufie, who was scouting ahead. The four walked over to Klufie to see what he was talking about. Ahead lay a clearing. About a kilometer and a half beyond it, they saw a series of buildings glittering in the noonday sun.

"It appears to be a settlement," commented Brenda.

"Shall we investigate, sir?" asked Carlos.

"Absolutely," replied Alex, hoping for a little excitement to take his mind off his ship.

The approach to the settlement was fairly uneventful; as they reached the last 50 meters, they spread out in hopes of getting a better view of the situation.

Upon reaching a small hill overlooking the settlement, Alex recalled the team to report on their initial observations.

"It appears to be some type of resort, Admiral," concluded Brenda.

"I would say so." Jon grinned as he held up his discovery, a small pair of silk underwear.

"Well, let's go and investigate," decided Alex.

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As they reached the outer edge of the "resort", the team noticed a large swimming pool with various skimpily clad men and women lying around its edges. It didn't take long for the team to realize that they had been noticed, too. A small group of them, three women and two men, approached the team. They were dressed in flowing, slightly translucent silk robes, which upon closer inspection

bore a strong resemblance to the material of the "undergarments" that Jon had found. One of the women came up to the team and in a light lilting voice began to speak. "Welcome to our humble oasis. I am Aria. Please come join us." She made a slight sweeping movement with her arms. "We've been expecting you."

The group froze.

"You were expecting us?" asked Alex, after recovering from the initial shock of Aria's words.

"Yes; we were sent word that you were coming," she responded innocently.

"By whom?" pressed Alex, who hated the obvious lack of control he had over this situation.

"Your benefactors wish to remain anonymous."

"But...who, what benefa-?"

"Please *come* with us," interrupted Aria, indicating that the subject was closed.

**Why was everyone cutting him off lately?** thought Alex. **Well, I'll follow you for now, at least 'til I get some more information.**

"Lead the way." Aria smiled and indicated for the group to follow her.

"Sir?" asked Carlos and Klufie.

"We'll do what they say until we can learn a little more about what's going on and who these 'benefactors' are," Alex whispered to them.

Aria led them to a series of small buildings lined up in a row. As they reached the door of the first building, Aria turned and faced Alex. "These will be your quarters."

"Quarters?" asked Alex. **What the hell was going on?!?** Alex's mind began race with thoughts of what might wait for him behind the door... A prison cell? Armed men? Vicious creature? Trap? Strange energy anomaly?? Anything could be behind that door, but one thing he was sure of, they weren't going to take him that easily. As she reached to open the door, Alex's body began to tense. The rest of the team read Alex's reaction and also prepared themselves. The door opened. Alex was ready for anything...except that! The room was covered with plush pillows. In the center was a divan, with a large bowl of grapes sitting beside it. Alex almost fell over from the tension that had built up in his body. Three very beautiful women in truly transparent flowing gowns came walking out through a door located on the far wall. They crossed the room and came up to Alex, drawing him into the room. Alex resisted. One of the women, with long blond hair, spoke. "Come, Admiral, let us relieve you of your tension." Alex looked to his team, trying to find some support among them. All they did was smile.

Jon looked at Alex. "Aw, go on, Alex," he advised, his grin turning to one of mischievousness. "We wouldn't want to offend our benefactors."

**Oh, thanks a lot, guys,** thought Alex. But then he looked at the women. **On the other hand, why am I fighting this?** Alex stopped resisting and looked back to his team. "Well, I guess it would be the proper thing to do," he stated, as though he was making some *big* sacrifice. He turned to the three women. "Lead the way."

They led Alex to the divan and indicated to him that they wanted him to sit. As he sat down, the door closed, shutting him off from the rest of the team. One of the women took out a big fan and began to cool him off. The second started to peel the grapes and feed them to him. **Can't get much better than this,** thought

Alex. Just then the third woman clapped her hands twice and the door at the far wall opened again. Alex looked, wondering what was coming now. Out of the door came two pairs of women, each carrying a large bowl of pasta smothered in a rich sauce. One pair came over, set the bowl beside him, and began to feed him some of best pasta he'd had in years. **Jon would be miffed if he knew what he was missing.** Dwelling on that that thought brought a grin to Alex's face.

Aria led the rest of the team to the next building. Upon reaching its door, she turned to Carlos and just stared for a few minutes. Carlos began to feel nervous under this scrutiny. "Is there something wrong?" he asked.

Aria cocked her head and took a breath. "Of all of you that have come to us, your wishes were the most 'interesting'. Regrettably, we have had problems fulfilling one of the wishes." Carlos began to worry. **Why, oh why, did Alex leave them?** All he wanted to do was return to the camp. Actually he would *love* to return to the ship. He opened his mouth, but all he could manage was a weak, "Oh?"

"Unfortunately, none of our race has an abundance of hair," she continued. "We hope this will suffice." She clapped her hands, and from a side alley came a man leading a white Labrador retriever. Carlos' face began to turn deathly white, and he began to sway. Klufie came up behind to help steady his friend. As he lent Carlos a hand, he whispered, "Remember, we don't want to offend our benefactors." Carlos shot Klufie a nasty glance. It was true, though; he had no right to refuse. Carlos swallowed and allowed the man to lead him into the room.

The room was littered with broken furniture. Carlos pulled up a three legged chair and sat down. The man handed him the leash and then left, closing the door behind him. In the dim light Carlos sighed, he was definitely not having fun.

"Woof."

Carlos looked down at the dog, who was wagging her tail at him. "Don't get any ideas," he informed the dog. Just then the lighting began to flicker on and off. Carlos looked around the room for the cause. Over in the far corner there was a woman groping the wall.

"I was informed that you found this quite pleasurable," she commented sensually.

"Ohh," moaned Carlos. He was finding this whole situation far from pleasurable.

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"Cargo Bay, report."

"Cargo Bay reports everything has been transported down, sir," replied Rhea from the Communications console.

"Excellent," commented Chaym. Everything was going along nicely. The mission had been completed and she still had almost two days left of command. Chaym hit the button on her personal 'com.

"Ensign Mitzi. Report."

"Ensign Mitzi HERE!" replied the disembodied voice. "We've just successfully converted the swimming pool into a giant cooler. Attendance has been fair, but has been steadily climbing in the last hour."

"Very good, Ensign," replied Chaym. "I'll be down shortly to personally inspect your work."

"Of course, sir."

"Captain Re'ming'ton out. Lt. Graevyn, Lt. Toland," added Chaym as she turned to the front of the bridge, "prepare to leave orbit."

"Aye, sir," replied Sasha and Toland simultaneously.

Just then, Chaym heard a derisive snort/annoyed *hmpf* from behind her.

"Something wrong, Ensign?" queried Chaym, as she rose to come up behind Rhea.

Rhea cleared her throat and turned to look at Chaym. "While we were orbiting Garius IV, I began uploading some linguistics information on the planet for my project. While linked to their communications system I found some very *odd* transmissions."

"Such as?"

"This, for example." Rhea entered a few commands and an image appeared on the view screen. Everyone on the bridge turned their attention to the viewer. On the screen was a man in his early sixties sitting in a cushioned chair.

**"Hello, Sy Sterling IV here for QVC. And have I got some deals for you...!"**

"NOOOO!" screamed the bridge crew.

"Rhea, shut it off!" screamed Sasha as she put her hands over her ears.

"Aye," replied Rhea calmly. "This was the other transmission."

Rhea hit another button and a new image appeared on the screen.

On the screen were five felinoid and lupine men in front of a pink backdrop making very "insinuating" gestures, followed by an announcer:

**"Mohans <--OOOHHH!>, Kyonens <--MMMMM!>, Caitians <--AAHHHH!>, and more Make your Furry Fantasies come true. Dial 1-900-FURY MEN."**

"Yes!" cried Chaym and Sasha.

"What was that number again?" called Sasha.

"Somebody get me a data padd," added Chaym as she ran back to the front of the bridge.

"Call coming in for you, sir, from Ensign Merritt," said Rhea. Chaym and Sasha quickly stopped their "drooling" and fantasizing.

"Ahem, yes," replied Chaym, trying to regain control after that commercial. "On main viewscreen."

On the screen stood, or more appropriately leaned, Ensign Merritt. His nose was thoroughly covered in zinc oxide and he was dressed in bright Bermuda shorts, and a tacky floral shirt.

"Permishshion <hic>, to I-I-leave my quarters-s-s-... <hic, hic> sir. I do-do bwleevfe <hic> believe I have learned <hic> the er-r-r-rors of my vays."

Chaym smiled. "Permission granted. And go get yourself a drink."

"T-t-thank <hic> you, s-s-sir," mumbled Merritt, as he fell over, successfully shutting off the monitor with his head.

Chaym turned to Rhea, smiling. "You see, my methods work."

Rhea turned back to her console and sighed. Even one of Buonocore's parties had more sanity than this.

"Well, let's get going," chimed Chaym as she clapped her paws together.

"Direction??" queried Sasha.

"Pick one."

Sasha closed her eyes while swirling a paw over the navigation panel. "Looks like were going..." She stopped twirling, placed her claw on the panel and opened her eyes. "Straight, sir."

"Then straight it is. Warp factor 4.376."

"Aye, sir!" Sasha and Toland chorused.

Chaym surveyed the bridge. Everything was going along nice and smoothly. "Sasha, if you have all the coordinates entered, would you care to join me for a trip down to Main Rec??"

"Most definitely!!"

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Upon entering Main Rec, Sasha and Chaym were bombarded by a multitude of lights and sounds. Streamers and balloons were everywhere. People were playing games, dancing, yelling, singing, and even one apparently drunk group was attempting to play Fizz-bin. Chaym smiled. Everyone appeared to be extremely happy.

"Hi, guys! Thought you'd never get here."

Chaym and Sasha turned to see Mitzi clad in a rather scanty leather outfit (what there was of it) with streamers in her hair and tail. At their shocked expressions, Mitzi grinned lewdly. "Found it in my closet. It's from the old band days. What'd ya think? Hors d'oeuvre??"

"Don't mind if I do," replied Chaym, popping a small green Tel-larite mouse into her mouth.

Just then Ensign Kovacs, a Nav Specialist, handed Sasha a drink. "Here, Sasha...oops, sorry, Lt., have a drink."

Sasha carefully sniffed at it. "What is it?"

"Only a beer. It's not very strong. Trust me...it takes a lot of 'em to get you drunk." He grinned.

"Sure, why not?"

Before Chaym could stop her, Sasha downed the whole glass.

"Not bad <hic>." Sasha beamed as she bounded off into the crowd.

"Mitzi, do me a favor, keep an eye on her?" asked Chaym, concern evident in her voice.

"No prob," replied Mitzi. "Hey, come over here. I have to show you the pool...I mean cooler."

As Chaym and Mitzi headed over to the pool, they saw Sasha on a table, in the middle of a crowd, sinking her paw into a jar of olives. As she pulled out her paw, on each claw were skewered a number of olives. "Anybody want an hors d'oeuvre??" she cried, as she flung the olives into the crowd. Shouts of "do it again" were heard in the distance.

Chaym stopped by the pool. "Gee, I wish I had longer claws."

"If you did...you wouldn't have Carlos," informed Mitzi.

Chaym nodded her head in agreement and picked up a drink. "Here's to short claws, then."

"To short claws," repeated Mitzi as they clinked glasses.

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"Where are you, teddy weddy bear??? Auntie Marla just wants to hug and squeeze you, and cuddle you and kiss you and luv you all to pieces."

Commander Buonocore shivered as the voice echoed through the halls. **Where to hide?! Where to hide?!?** He peered around the corner to make sure no one was in the corridor ahead. That's when his eyes fell upon a sign. **Any port in a storm.** He grinned to himself. Quickly, he dashed into the Arboretum. As the door shut behind him, in the midst of catching his breath, he took a chance to get a good look at himself. He tried to find the clasp so he could get out of the tight fitting teddy bear suit in which he had recently found himself.

"How'd she...?? On second thought, maybe I don't want to know." Failing to find the clasp he sought, he walked over to the nearest window in hopes of finding a way out of this suit in his reflection.

"A red bow, too!!" he sighed as he untied it. "That's the last time I fall asleep in my office."

Just then, he thought he heard the faint sound of a door opening. Swiftly, Stephen dashed behind a row of rose bushes. **How'd she find me?** He heard footsteps coming toward him. He crouched down as much as possible. The figure was just on the other side of the bushes. **Maybe if I don't make a move...**

"I'm surprised to see you here, Commander Buonocore."

**That wasn't her?** He stood ever so slowly. "Ahem. Oh...Ensign Rhea...I might just say the same of you."

"Oh, I come here occasionally, when I want to be alone," she replied coolly, smelling one of the nearby roses.

"Must spend a lot of time here," he chided.

Rhea glared at him slightly. Then she noticed what he was wearing. "Interesting attire for the Arboretum."

"Wha...?" He looked at her, then it dawned on him. His cheeks turned a deep shade of pink. "Oh! Oh, this. You see, I can explain. I was..."

"Oh, that's quite all right, Commander. I really have no desire to hear of your current escapade," she stated. "So if you'd excuse me, the Arboretum is a little too crowded for my tastes." With that, she turned to leave, but not before Buonocore had a chance to catch her by the arm.

"No, wait. You gotta help me," he pleaded.

"Oh, really??"

"You see; I'm not even supposed to be on board. I should be with Alex and the rest of the Command Staff."

"Well, then, why aren't you?" she replied in a slightly bored tone.

"After the orders came in, I decided to take a short nap in my office. When I woke up I was in THIS!!" he cried as he tried to pull the costume off. "And not only that, there's this group of women after me."

"That's the first time I've ever heard you complain about that."

"You're just jealous. Wish they'd let you in on the fun??" he cooed, displaying one of those smug grins that she had really begun to find quite annoying.

"It appears to me that this is nothing you can't handle yourself, Commander," she replied, the ice forming in her words. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I have work to do." And she headed out the door. Just as she turned to head to her quarters, she bumped into Marla.

"Oh, sorry, Rhea," giggled Marla. "You haven't seen Stephen, have you??"

Rhea paused, for about a whole three seconds, before pointing toward the Arboretum.

"Thanks a lot!" chimed Marla as she dashed through the Arboretum doors.

As the doors shut, Rhea turned to leave, but not before she heard, "Oh there you are, my little teddy weddy. Smile for Auntie Marla. <click>"

Later, at the party, people commented on how they'd actually seen Ensign Rhea smiling earlier this evening as they passed her in the corridor.

\*\*\*\*\*

Back in Main Rec....

"...And thanks for helping with the communications, Kris," added Chaym as she and Lt. Cmdr. Ragan passed out finger paints to the crew.

"I think the staticky image of the transmission was a nice touch." Kris grinned. "Hanging around Michael is finally paying off."

Chaym nodded in agreement; the plan had worked perfectly. "By the way, you haven't happened to perhaps have seen Sasha lately? I know she loves to finger paint."

"Last time I saw her she was opening beer cans with the claws of one hand and performing shiskabob with the other," answered Kris.

"Remind me to kill Ensign Kovacs."

"Sure thing," replied Kris as she tossed some purple paint to Lt. Rhonda E. Green.

"Chaym, there's a few Andorian hamsters left, if you want 'em." yelled Lt. Amy Wilson from over by the snack table.

"If you don't mind finishing, Kris..." drooled Chaym as she headed over to the table. "I love Andorian hamsters. They're great dipped in cheese sauce."

Kris watched her go, trying to fight the nauseated feeling that was welling up in her stomach.

\*\*\*\*\*

Carlos sighed as he leaned back in the lounge chair, taking a small sip of his orange soda. "This is the life," he commented to himself. "Tech manuals, soda, sun, and nothing furry as far as the eye can see."

As he looked around, he saw the rest of the landing party were also enjoying themselves. Some were with him by the pool, either relaxing in the sun or swimming. Others, like Bob, were having their own wishes catered to. For example, Rahadyan was reading his poetry to a group of rapt listeners, Brenda was inspecting the latest teddy bears, and Klufie was watching the latest sporting events. **All in all**, Carlos thought to himself, **this has not been a bad mission.**

"Carlos?"

Carlos turned to see who was addressing him. It was Csuti in a pair of neon orange Bermuda shorts.

"What's up, Csuti?"

"Have you seen Jon??"

"Why, no..."

Just then they both heard a crash and a loud scream coming from the buildings where the team had left Alex with his entourage of women and pasta. Carlos and Csuti looked to see what was causing all the fuss. Out of one of the smaller buildings came two figures running toward them. As they got closer, Carlos recognized

the first one as Jon wrapped in a towel. The second figure appeared to be a large, sumo-sized woman.

"NOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Go away!!! I don't want another massage!!" screamed Jon as he leaped over Carlos and into the pool, losing his towel along the way.

"Sorry I asked," commented Csuti.

"Sorry I looked," added Carlos as the towel landed at his feet.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Hey! Who turned down the lights?" asked Chaym as she stumbled onto the bridge with a load of "groceries" in her arms.

"Lt. Cmdr. Ragan acquired a really 'interesting' film," explained Ensign Wolberg at Sciences.

"I got it from Commander Buonocore's *private* files." added Ragan.

"What's it called?"

"I don't know what it's called," added Ensign Newman as he turned his head upside down to look at the screen. "I'd call it...How the hell do they do that?"

Chaym watched the film for a few minutes before proceeding to the command chair. As she sat down, she noticed that Sasha and Sonnenfeld were not watching the movie. Instead, they were playing Tic-Tac-Toe on her body.

"Ahem."

The crew looked at Chaym.

"Okay, everybody, supplies have arrived!" she announced as the bridge crew broke out into a cheer. "I got wine coolers, bean dip, chips, mozzarella sticks and sauce, jelly beans, chocolate covered gummie bears.... Here, Sasha, I got you a bag of Crispy Ears™." She tossed the bag over to Sasha.

"Ugh!! They're cat flavored...you...cannibal!" screamed Sasha as she threw the bag back at Chaym.

"Hey, one person's cannibalism is another's hors d'oeuvre. Here, have the rabbit ones."

Chaym tossed the other bag to Sasha and sat in the chair. Propping her feet up over one of the arm rests, she pulled out a six-pack of spray cheese, and a bottle of yshiwk, a hard liquor that was a favorite among a number of furred species. She downed about a quarter of the bottle before proceeding to squirt spray cheese into her open muzzle.

"Ensign Merritt calling for you, sir," reported Kris, whom Chaym just now noticed was covered in finger paint.

"On audio."

"Aye, sir."

"Yes, Mr. Merritt, what is it?" asked Chaym, slightly annoyed at the interruption.

"S-s-sir <hic>, I b-beweeve that...that I have <hic> scheen the er-r-rors of my..my..my vays. <hic> Phermischion to l-l-leave my <hic> quarters. <hic>"

"That's it!!!"

Chaym turned towards Nav to see what the commotion was about, completely forgetting Mr. Merritt.

"That's the LAST time I play with you!!" yelled Sasha as she rose to her feet. "I'm going to go find Mitzi! At least SHE lets me win. <hic>"

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"...and I didn't think you'd want to miss Finger Painting," smiled Rhonda as she and Lt. Stephanie Richardson headed toward Main Rec.

"Thanks," replied Stephanie. "Who knows, maybe I can get a few ink blot tests made while I'm at it."

Suddenly they heard a commotion down the hall. "What the heck?" said Rhonda.

Just then, five women came around the corner carrying something, or someone, above their heads. Green and Richardson backed up against the nearest wall, so as not to be run over by the oncoming parade/train. As the group passed by, both got a good look at who they were carrying. It was Commander Buonocore. **In a Teddy bear suit?** thought Stephanie. He shrugged and then gave a grin, one that spoke volumes without uttering a sound. After the train/parade disappeared around the corner, the two just looked at each other and smiled.

"The Rogue is at it again," the two chimed in unison.

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One hour,  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a bottle of Yshiwk, 1½bags of Crispy Ears™ and 4 cans of spray cheese later...

"Hmmm. Not a bad movie," commented Chaym, licking the remaining spray cheese from her muzzle all the while trying to get more comfortable in the Captain's chair.

Just then the turbo lift doors parted, letting Sasha onto the bridge. "Couldn't find the #\$\$#@ Rec. Deck," she informed them as she sat down at Nav. "I have SUCH a headache."

"Ensign Mitzi to bridge!"

"Captain Re'ming'ton here."

"Bad news, Chaym. I mean real bad news."

"What's wrong, Mitz?"

"We just ran out of alcohol."

"Oh, great!! What else can go wrong??"

Just then the main view screen switched to an image of a Romulan Commander.

"Boo. Put the other movie back on," whined Sonnenfeld as he threw popcorn at the screen.

"I think my headache JUST got bigger," moaned Sasha as she placed her head in her arms.

"Federation Vessel, this is Commander Tr'sabrak. You have violated Rihannsu space. Explain yourselves."

< Achoo. > greeted Chaym. "This is Acting Captain Chaym Gale' Re'ming'ton of the U.S.S. Avenger. Sorry 'bout that; must have made a wrong turn somewhere. My navigator is nursing a MAJOR hangover."

"Do you take me for a fool!?"

**Well...** thought Chaym inwardly to herself.

"Am I supposed to believe that a heavily armed flagship of the Federation just happened to make a wrong turn and end up in Rihannsu space!?"

"Well...ya see, if you look at it like this..."

"We will teach the Federation not to go poking around where it's not wanted," interrupted the Romulan Commander.

And with that the screen went blank.

"Sir, the Romulans are powering up their phasers."

"Shields!" yelled Chaym. "Prepare to fire photon torpedoes!!"

"But sir..."

"FIRE!"

"But..."

"I said FIRE!!" growled Chaym, teeth bared.

"Aye, sir," the helmsman replied.

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"Sir, the Federation ship is firing at us."

"I knew they were lying," replied the Commander. "Prepare to return fire. We'll blow them back to Federation space if need be."

The ship rocked slightly under the impact of the torpedoes.

"Damage report."

"Strange."

"Explain," intoned the Commander.

"N-No damage." replied the helmsman. "What's strange is that upon impact the Federation torpedoes exploded into a burst of brightly colored pa--"

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"Confetti!?"

"It was supposed to be a surprise, sir."

**Oh, grrr-eaat,** thought Chaym as she flopped into the command chair. **How am I supposed to explain to Alex the reason his ship is in pieces is because the crew decided to surprise me and load confetti into the torpedoes?**

"The Romulans are preparing to fire their forward phasers," announced the helmsman.

**Looks like I won't have to explain to Alex. There's not going to be enough of the ship OR us left to even make it back.** Chaym sighed. Being captain wasn't fun anymore.

"The Romulan ship is powering down!!" cried Sonnenfeld.

"What? What was that!?" asked Chaym, wiping the Mohan death prayer from her mind.

"I said, the ship is powering down."

"The Romulans are hailing us, sir," interrupted Kris.

"Put them on screen." Maybe, just maybe, there was still a chance.

"What is the meaning of this!?" barked the Commander.

"As I was trying to tell you; we were having a party and accidentally wound up here. If yo..."

"Captain??"

"Not now!" snapped Chaym

"But Captain, I think there's something wrong with Lt. Graevyn," replied Sonnenfeld in a worried tone. Chaym looked over toward Nav to see that Sasha had turned plaid.

"Sasha?? You all right??" asked Chaym, worry evident in her voice.

Slowly Sasha lifted her head off the Nav panel to get a good look at herself. "Humph! Plaid?? Never turned plaid before."

**Oh brother,** sighed Chaym to herself. What was she going to do?? She had to find some way out of this. If she could just reason with the Romulan Commander.

"Commander Tr'sabrak, I..."

"Ensign Mitzi to the bridge!!" came the disembodied voice over the comm system.

"What is it, Mitzi!?"

"Sir, it's getting pretty bad down here. If we don't get some alcohol soon, we're in for a possible mutiny."



"I'll be down shortly. Until I get there, I want you to—"

"Ahem," came a slightly disturbed voice from behind her.

**Oh my gosh!! I completely forgot about the Romulans!** Chaym turn to back to the main viewscreen, realizing that they might not live long enough for a mutiny to occur. She looked up at the Commander, expecting at any minute the wrath of the entire Romulan ship to come down on her. But when she looked at him, instead of fury she saw...what did it look like?? Amusement??? He actually looked amused?!

"You were not kidding, were you?" was all he said.

"No," she sighed, falling into her chair. "No, I wasn't."

She watched as another Romulan officer came up to the Commander and whispered something into his ear. He nodded and turned to Chaym.

"Well, my crew and I have been on patrol for a long time...and they have been in need of a little R & R..."

Chaym caught on instantly. "Commander, I invite you and your crew, in the spirit of universal peace and friendship, to join us in our *little* party."

"I graciously accept your invitation. Oh, before I forget, is there anything you'd like us to bring?"

Chaym grinned. "Got any Romulan ale??"

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Meanwhile, back on Matri III, the landing party had all gathered around the pool. Everyone seemed to be having a good time...

**"AHHHHH!!!!!! Get away from me! I don't WANT another massage!!! I've had ten already. AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!"**

...well...almost everyone.

Alex looked over the team and sighed. **It's now or never.** He walked over to the diving board and climbed onto it to get everyone's attention.

"All right crew, fun's over. Time to pack-up; the ship will be here in an hour." **I hope,** Alex added to himself.

"Awwwww..."

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**Captain's log, Stardate...damn.**

**What's the date? Sasha, what's today? No! I know it's Thursday. What's the date?? The Stardate!!!!!! Oh, never mind. To continue, the Romulans have returned to their ship. We have returned to our side of the Neutral Zone and are back on course to rendezvous with the landing party. I have ordered sickbay to begin distributing soberol to the crew. I must add before closing, the Romulans are pretty good partiers.**

"Ugh!" moaned Chaym as she continued to squirm in the command chair. "Damn! This chair is uncomfortable. There's no room for my tail."

"Tail?!?!"

Chaym looked over at Sasha to see what she was babbling about.

"Oh my gosh!" cried Sasha as she looked all around her.

"Where's my tail!?!?" Quickly she dashed toward the turbo-lift.

"Oh, brother." Slowly Chaym lowered her head into her hands.

**What I wouldn't do for a nap.**

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"Beam 'em up, beam 'em down, beam 'em up, beam 'em down... I want workman's comp for this," the Transporter technician moaned to himself. What was it?? Less than seventy-two hours ago he had beamed them all down?? Why couldn't they wait until Lyons' shift. "Why me?"

"...and you've just *got* to take a look at the shirts Kris and Rhonda designed. They're great," finished Sasha as she and Chaym walked into the transporter room.

**Oh, great,** sighed the technician as he saw who entered.

"Energize," came Alex's voice over the 'com.

"Aye, sir," replied the technician. **Hopefully this is the last one.**

Alex's surroundings began to slowly solidify around him. **At least the transporter room is still intact,** he thought to himself. Then he noticed Chaym and Sasha were there.

"Ah, Acting Captain Re'ming'ton," greeted Alex as he stepped off the transporter pad.

"SSHHHHH! Not *so* loud," whispered Chaym as she and Sasha covered their ears.

That queasy feeling Alex had had before leaving on the mission began to return. He smiled. "Would you both accompany me to the bridge, please?" **I want you in choking distance while I check out my ship,** Alex added to himself. And with that they left the transporter room.

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Was it him or did the walls look freshly painted? That stuff on the floor...streamers?? And was it him or were the lights dimmed??? As the doors to the turbo-lift closed, Alex took one last look at the corridor.

"Bridge," announced Alex to the computer. The lift started and Alex looked over at Chaym and Sasha. Chaym still had that grin on her face and Sasha seemed to be hiding something behind her back.

"Sasha," Alex began, remembering to keep his voice low.

"What is that...?"

< Screech!! >

**What was that?** thought Alex. The doors opened, but not to the bridge. "Computer, why did we stop?"

"Override. The turbo-lift was making excessive noise near some crew quarters," responded the computer. **Was it him or did the computer sound different?** "Chaym??" said Alex, trying to hold his temper. "Explain."

"Well, sir, it's like this..." explained Chaym. "Ensign Cohen kept calling to the bridge complaining of the noise, but nothing I did made him happy. Finally I told him to handle it himself. So he got together some of the other engineers and they overrode the lift commands so it would stop passing by their quarters."

**Ohhhh. Why do I ask?** sighed Alex. "Well, let's go to the other lift. And it better work," added Alex as he indicated for the two furries to go ahead of him.

As they headed for the other lift they passed various crewmen wearing tee-shirts and giggling. As one Ensign passed, Alex took a good look at the shirt. On the front were two hand prints (in various colors) and the message:

I WAS FINGER

(painted)  
BY A ROMULAN

And on the back:

RE'MING'TON  
BASH '92

Alex paused. "Main Rec.," he stated and took off at a quick clip, Chaym and Sasha running to catch up.

As the door to Main Rec opened, Alex was blocked by Mitzi, who had apparently just thrown her uniform on, for it was all rumpled and she still had streamers in her fur and tail.

"Oh, Admiral!" she cooed. "You're back! Enjoy your trip?"

He tried to maneuver around her, but she was persistent. All he could do was get a few quick glimpses of the inside of the room. Was that a paint roller in the Ensign's hand?? More streamers??? And what was all that running water for?? Realizing that he wasn't getting anywhere, he stopped fighting and resumed his walk to the lift.

"Ahem. Was your 'mission' successful?" called out Mitzi again.

"Oh, yes... Yes it was, Ensign." clipped Alex. "Coming, Chaym...?"

"Yes, sir."

The three resumed their walk in tense silence. As they rounded a corner, they could hear giggling and gasps coming from a nearby room. Just then the door opened and Commander Buonocore slipped out, gasping for air and wearing a large grin on his face. As a matter of fact, about all he had on him was that grin, for all that remained of his costume was a few non-strategically placed scraps of material. Stephen looked up and, for the first time, noticed Alex standing there.

"Alex," squeaked Stephen as he performed the most amazing quick salute-hand maneuver any of them had ever seen.

**Ohh... Not you, too, Buonocore,** sighed Alex to himself.

"Commander. We missed you."

Stephen's face went pale. **Yes, Alex, I know. I have some explaining to do. But please not now.** "If you'd excuse me, sir." And with that Stephen grabbed the shirt from Sasha's hand. "I'll return it to you later," he said, quickly wrapped it around his waist, and proceeded down the hall to his quarters. Chaym watched Stephen walk down the corridor, her head cocked. **I guess maybe with fur it could be found appealing.** She shrugged and followed Alex and Sasha into the turbo-lift. Before the doors closed, though, they could hear Buonocore in the distance: "Commander Buono-core to Ensign Rhea.... You were right; I was able to handle it."

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The lift doors parted to reveal the bridge. **Well, everything appears to be in one piece,** commented Alex to himself. As the two furrries stayed by the lift, Alex approached his chair. **Spoke too soon, I see,** Alex added, for as he looked at his chair he noticed a big hole in its back. Chaym looked down at her feet as Alex glared at her. "Explain, *Commander!*"

"It wasn't accommodating to furrries, sir."

**Wasn't accommodating!!! Wasn't accommodating!! It's my chair!! It doesn't have to accommodate anyone 'cept me!!!** Alex mentally yelled. Then he noticed the box behind Sasha and Chaym.

He nodded in its direction. Chaym turned to Sasha and Ragan, who lifted up the box. Under the box was a purple velvet "love"/command chair.

"A gift." Chaym smiled. "We made it during the Re'ming'ton Bas-Art Day. Yes! It was made for you during Art Day."

Alex, although he still kept telling himself he was furious with Chaym, couldn't help but smile. "All right, Re'ming' ton." **I may regret this.** "Report."

Chaym cleared her throat and straightened up. "Yes, sir. We delivered the equipment...ahead of schedule, in fact. And...oh, yes, we now have a steady supply of Romulan ale...sir."

Alex just stood, mulling over what she said. Sonnenfeld turned around. "Oh, Sasha, did you ever find your tail??"

Sasha froze. Reaching behind herself, she sighed and smiled.

**Yep. Still there.**

After that little scene, Alex made up his mind. **Yes, before any more surprises...**

"Re'ming'ton, I want you in my ready room in three hours. Be prepared to give a full, *detailed* report. Dismissed."

Sasha and Chaym quickly ran into the turbo-lift.

With that taken care of Alex watched as Ensign Kovacs and Ensign Schunk took his old chair and replaced it with the purple "thing".

"Ensign DenDulk," said Alex, "set a course for Starbase 29." **I think I need to have a talk with Admiral Nielson.**

"Alex." The Admiral turned as Carlos walked onto the bridge.

"You left this down on the planet. I thought you might want it." Carlos handed Alex a translucent bra with what appeared to be signatures on it.

"Thank you, Carlos," replied Alex as he sat down in his chair, holding his memento. Suddenly the chair began to vibrate. Alex looked out the view screen and just smiled. Slowly the bridge faded to black.

**Well, that's the end of our little story. Names were *not* changed to protect the innocent, for *who* on this ship is innocent. 'Til next time...**

Oh! And don't forget...coming soon to a word processor near you:

**LET THE FUR FLY Part Deux**

What happens when the Pirates get a hold of a shuttlecraft and go out in search of the ultimate party??? Will Buonocore get the women?? Will Ty really become Emperor of Matrii III??? Tune in and see...

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