

FROM THE AVENGER LOGS...

TALES OF THE *KOBAYASHI MARU*: RAHADYAN'S STORY

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The day I incurred the wrath of the *Avenger's* chief engineering officer was only a couple of months after I'd become a permanent member of the *Avenger* staff, replacing Lieutenant Alex Levin as chief helmsman. It was in Main Recreation during a going-away gathering for Larisa el-Ibrahim, recently promoted to lieutenant commander and preparing to transfer to the newly-commissioned *Abbe*-class destroyer *Diponegoro* as her executive officer.

I was over by the replicators talking with Bill Johnson, Tom Colgan, Aleatha Travers, and a few others when I heard my name being called. The tone was rather stern. "*Mr.* Sastrowardoyo!"—heavy emphasis on the mister. It was Lt. Commander George Padovan, the chief engineer. Padovan is a couple of heads taller than I, about the size of an Imperial-race Klingon, but possessed of an open, friendly face. Usually friendly, that is.

"Afternoon, Mr. Padovan," I said affably. "Won't you join us?"

"I need to talk to you," he said without preamble. "What's this I hear about how you treat engines?"

I started to laugh, then stopped at the look on Padovan's face. "I'm sorry, it's really not a laughing matter. It wasn't then, but it seems funny now." I looked at Bill Johnson. He grinned back. I turned back to Padovan. "I have an idea of what you heard, but I'd like to hear it from you."

"Brenda told me," he said archly, "that you have a nasty habit of jettisoning warp engines at Klingons." He fixed a baleful glare at me.

"You did *what*?" said Tom Colgan.

"It happened during the *Kobayashi Maru*," I explained. "One of the crisis-simulation exams that they give at Command School? I was there, oh, nine years ago." Although Colgan, Travers and Padovan were all lieutenant commanders, none of them had yet taken the graduate curriculum at Starfleet Academy's Command Staff College required to become either a ship's commanding officer or executive officer. Colgan had previously served in various divisions, culminating in his latest post as chief of shipboard security, reporting to another lieutenant commander, Chief of Security Steven Romano; Travers, his wife, had advanced to her rank via the communications and sciences tracks and was currently the *Avenger's* archaeologist; and Padovan had come up through the ranks via the engineering track. Of the small crowd gathered, only Johnson, el-Ibrahim, the *Diponegoro's* Captain Moyet and myself had attended the Command Staff College, or Command School, as it was more often called.

"I haven't been there yet," said Colgan. "I've been giving thought to applying." He glanced over at Aleatha, who simply set her mouth in a thin line of disapproval and said nothing.

"Anyway," I continued, "what the *Kobayashi Maru* is supposed to do is put you in the center seat, throw you into a situation where you have to make a difficult decision, and you just—" I fished

around for a phrase that wouldn't give too much away—"make them, make the decisions based on your experience and training."

"So explain *throwing* warp engines," said Padovan impatiently.

"Mr. Padovan—George," I said in my best placating tone. "I'm not sure if I can actually tell you if you haven't been to Command School." I looked over at Bill Johnson.

"There are other crisis simulations in Command School," volunteered Johnson. "If George goes, and even if he's given this particular test, he'll still have to come up with his own answers." He looked around at the small group. "That's true of everybody else here, too."

"True," I mused. "The general parameters are the same, but the particulars aren't." I turned back to Padovan. "Anyway, this particular test is called the *Kobayashi Maru* because it involves a ship of that name, a cargo transport..."

"That I'd have to rescue?" interrupted Padovan. "Doesn't sound like too much of a problem..."

"Damn it, George! Let me finish," I responded heatedly. I took a breath. "Okay. You're the commanding officer in a bridge simulator, *Constitution*-class vessel. You need something big to give you confidence, right? In most versions of the *Kobayashi Maru* simulation, you're the only one being tested. In a few, but not many versions, they simultaneously test officers serving at helm, navigations, sciences, communications, even the Exec's position..."

"In the Exec's position, you'd just be supervising the juniors, or temporarily taking over if somebody got hurt..." said Padovan, thinking aloud.

"True, but let me finish... You're cruising along one of the borders, right? Klingon or Romulan or perhaps unexplored territory. All is fairly normal. Suddenly the ship receives a distress signal from a civilian vessel..."

"How would I know that the distress call is real?" asked Padovan.

"I'm *getting* to that. You *wouldn't* know." I drew myself up to my full height, and bore down on the chief engineer with my best pissed-off professor look. "Don't interrupt again, Mr. Padovan, or I'll stop right now."

"Well..."

"I'm not joking, George," I said evenly. I liked George a lot, but he was starting to acquire some nasty habits from Lt. Commander Zulkowski, one of his deputies in Engineering.

"All *right*, I'm sorry," he said petulantly.

"One of the things you have to decide is if the distress signal is real—that's one branch of the decision tree. The next is how you should respond to it; the thing is to not simply disregard the entire thing as 'just a simulation'—you have to treat it as if it's really going on, okay?" Padovan nodded. "Okay. In my particular simulation, we were on picket duty along the Klingon border, a light-year parallel to the Neutral Zone, and we get this distress call. Ship struck by gravitic mine, hull breach, many casualties, the

works. Et cetera. ID match, same communications format as ours and all. Location: inconveniently within the Zone. I decide to take it as real. The other ship's at the edge of sensor range and there's tachyonic interference from a nova or something." I paused, waiting for George to interrupt. When he didn't, I said, "Follow me so far?"

"Yeah."

"So there's interference and the science officer can make out enough of a sensor ghost to determine that it's about the right mass and apparently the right configuration for a vessel of that class. I instruct the comms officer to dispatch a message back to Star Fleet Command saying I'm breaking treaty by entering the Neutral Zone, but invoking Article 366 of the Organian Accords. Do you know what that is?"

"The 3 R's," he said quickly, "Rapid Rescue Response clause."

"Yup." I realized I was just at the edge of condescension with George, in order to show off in front of Johnson, Moyet (under whom I had served when we were both on the *Tereshkova*, she as Exec, me as an Alien Contact Officer), and the others. I didn't like myself too much in that instant. Padovan was a grade junior to me, but he deserved much more respect than I was giving him. "So I give the navigator the course to the signal, and tell the helm officer to go in at warp six. The transporter rooms are standing by, as well as the hangar decks..." George was raising his hand. "Go ahead."

"How many people are on this...*Kobayashi Maru*?" he asked.

"It's a *Lotus Flower*-class neutronic fuel carrier. Crew of 80, 300 passengers," I said, thinking back. "Casualties are about one-third of all that. *Not* an easy job. Medical teams are standing by, Security division's hot to trot for an exfiltration, okay? So we're tracking down the distress call, sensors extended to nearly the limit...and six Klingon D-7's shimmy out of cloak. Two squadrons of three each, moving to englobe: three above, three below my ship. While they're forming a cage around me, the distress call blips out.

"Yes, it's a trap," I responded to George's putting up his hand. He put it down. "One of the squadron leaders hails us." I dropped my voice half an octave, and did my best comic-opera villain growl. "You are in violation of the Neutral Zone. Stand by to be boarded or be destroyed.' Usual Saturday-morning holocartoon bullshit. But just so I get the message, he fires a torpedo over our port bow. I am NOT AT ALL pleased. I am also sweating bullets." I paused and took a sip of my drink, my third Aldebaranian whiskey in an hour. I was starting to feel it, too. "We can't outrun them, we can't outgun them—but I can take those bastards with me rather than be dragged back under disruptors and photon torpedoes to their nearest base." My voice rose. "I can't give them access, I *won't* give them access, to one of our top-of-the-line ships. So I decide to run down the Klingon squadron leaders. Yes, George?" I said patiently, reining my voice back down to normal. He was raising his hand yet again.

"But you wouldn't get all of them, Mr. Sastrowardoyo. Not if you tried that while they're englobing. You'd get one, maybe two..."

"Right. So I give the helmsman and navigator a plan. We accelerate on a course that would take us *between* two of the six ships..." Forestalling Padovan's inevitable question, I added "They're at all six points of a hexahedron, average distance off our bow: 400 kilometers. No doubt their sensors are trained on our warp engines to see if we're inducing a buildup to matter-antimatter detonation. At warp six, we can still cover a fair amount of space in a few seconds, but there's no way that we can outrun all six

Klingons, right? I give the engineer the signal to do two things: a) de-activate the shields; and b) simultaneously fire the explosive bolts connecting the warp nacelles, and their pylons, to the secondary hull WHILE WE'RE STILL IN WARP. Then the helmsman turns the ship down the negative Z-axis with our rapidly decaying warpfield. The two warp nacelles only brush the bows of two Klingons but—KABOOM! Two down, four to go. And there's a chain reaction. Two more blow up! KABOOM! And another—" Padovan was waving his right arm impatiently, but clenching his jaw so he wouldn't talk out of turn. "Go ahead, George."

"But you can't do that, Rahadyan!"—the first time he'd called me by my first name in all of the months I'd been on *Avenger*—"You can't jettison warp engines while still in warp AND retain enough of a subspace field to get far enough away. Aside from overstressing the superstructure of the ship to bits, you'd be caught by the first explosion."

"There are many things one can do in a simulation that you can't do in real life. And no, I didn't reprogram the simulator beforehand." I paused. "We DID get caught by the *third* explosion."

There was an uncertain burst of laughter from the crowd. George just gave me a deadly look. "So you deliberately destroyed the ship."

"In simulation," I appended quickly. "And took care of the Klingons. Isn't that more important?"

"You deliberately destroyed the ship," he repeated, more slowly.

"I still got a B-plus," I said defensively.

"Was there a way to NOT destroy the ship?" Padovan asked quietly.

"Yes. No. I don't know," I said. I smiled weakly, apologetically. I had perfected that particular smile years ago. It didn't always keep me out of trouble, but sometimes... I also couldn't tell Padovan—or anyone else that had never taken it—there is no real way to win a *Kobayashi Maru*. It's supposed to test a potential CO's reaction to a no-win situation. Only a James T. Kirk could get an A-plus, and rumor had it *he* cheated.

"My engines," he said, looking down at the floor. His voice was almost inaudible, with little trace of emotion. He raised his eyes to me, and the look he gave me could have frozen a nova in place. "I'm keeping my eye on you," said George Padovan. Then he wheeled about and strode from the room.

Johnson and I exchanged a glance. "He'll be okay," said Bill. "Just give him time."

"Perhaps what I should have done," I said, "was to lie."

"As in deny that you've never—and would never—use such an unorthodox stratagem as throwing warp engines?" The executive officer shook his head. "As part of a team, as part of *our* team, George should be able to count on the resourcefulness of the people upstairs."

"What you could have done," opined el-Ibrahim, "was given Lt. Commander Padovan a name other than *Kobayashi Maru* for the name of the ship in distress..."

I nodded. "That didn't occur to me until too late."

"Don't worry, Rahadyan," said Sabrina Moyet kindly. "He'll get over it." She took a sip of her drink, then adopted an expression of mock resignation. "After those few occasions on the *Tereshkova*, we all had to—otherwise Captain Morgenthau and I would have re-instituted the practice of keel-hauling..."

"What's *that* supposed to mean?" I said in a pained tone, though I knew very well.

Bill Johnson said, "Oh, I read about some of these, um, 'occasions' in your personnel jacket, Rahadyan." He returned my look of annoyance with the perfect imitation of a Vulcan's raised eyebrow. "What's the *full* story behind the rediscovery of the Earth colony on Califia Prime?" he asked Moyet.

"Well..." she began.

But that's a tale for another time.

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