

# — STAR TREK — ENTERPRISE



## Missing Pieces *Part I*



KATHY ROSE



## **Notice :**

This ebook can not be sold or copied in any case, even partially or in its graphic components, for any edition. This story is the property of the author, its edition or diffusion is not authorised without the explicit permission of the author, even for the French translated version.

This book is for all public.

We wish you a pleasant time reading this story.

The mystery was solved when the man, plate in hand, turned around to face the room. Mayweather could see a caduceus in addition to rank insignia pins for lieutenant commander. The medical symbol meant the newcomer had to be the ship's new doctor.

Mayweather hadn't heard anything about the newcomer, other than that the captain had finally gotten someone to fill the medical position. Curious to find out more, Mayweather caught the man's eye and gestured for him to approach.

"Welcome aboard," Mayweather said, getting to his feet and introducing himself.

The man set his plate on the table and grasped Mayweather's outstretched hand, giving it a hearty shake. "Ensign," he said, his voice a pleasant baritone. "I'm Doctor Weber."

Virtual Season 6 episode 1

Title : Missing Pieces, part One

Originally published on 6 October 2006

Author : Kathy Rose

Original revision : Kylie Lee, PJ in NH

This cover artwork: Laurent Denis

© EVS6 - Enterprise Virtual Season 6

<http://virtual.entstcommunity.org>

Producers : Medie, Kylie Lee.

French translation by Laurent available on website

<http://startrek.enterprise.online.fr>

Disclaimer: Star Trek: Enterprise, its characters and related properties are Registered Trademarks of Paramount Pictures.

These novels are written by fans for the enjoyment of fans. EVS6 project and its French translated version are non-profit endeavours. No infringement of UPN, Paramount Pictures, Viacom or their associates copyrights is intended. Nothing here can be sold or distributed in any case on other websites and any electronic support. Their copy is not authorised, except for a strictly private reading on your own computer at a later time.

-----  
First diffusion of this free ebook version September 2007

Revision 1

Kathy Rose

# **Missing Pieces**

## **Part One**

In the EVS6 collection :

6.01 Missing Pieces, Part One

6.02 Missing Pieces, Part Two

*6.03 to 6.17 work in progress, available on original site :*

*6.03 Inside Job*

*6.04 Deep in the Shadows*

*6.05 Honored Daughter*

*6.06 Special Ops, Part One*

*6.07 Special Ops, Part Two*

*6.08 Resolution*

*6.09 And I Will Show You the Man*

*6.10 Wakeless*

*6.11 Memories*

*6.12 Denobulan Deceptions*

*6.13 Friend or Foe*

*6.14 Starbase None*

*6.15 Weapons of Destruction*

*6.16 Heralds of War, Part One*

*6.17 Heralds of War, Part Two*

See also the complete EVS5 collection :

5.01 Damage Control, Part One

5.02 Damage Control, Part Two

5.03 Distant Sun

5.04 Home Fires

5.05 Echoes of Deception

5.06 Starbase One, Part One

5.07 Starbase One, Part Two

5.08 Fire of Water

5.09 Bitter Harvest

5.10 Veiled Threat

5.11 Amalgam

5.12 Machinations

5.13 From Alpha Century with Love, I : Hope for the best...

5.14 From Alpha Century..., II : ...Prepare for the worst

5.15 From Alpha Century..., III : The Battle and the War

# CHAPTER

# 1

A light knock at the door brought Malcolm Reed instantly awake. He sat up on the bunk where he'd fallen asleep in his clothes. He had intended to close his eyes for only a few minutes, but crawling around the accessways of the cargo ship had been more strenuous than he'd anticipated, and he'd dropped off to sleep without realizing it.

Rubbing a hand over his face, he called out, "Enter."

The door opened and the outline of the Sanctuary's lanky first officer filled the frame. Reed reached over and touched the light control so he could see his visitor's face. "Yes?" he asked, squinting in the sudden light.

"I didn't mean to disturb you." The other man took in Reed's rumpled state. "But we just got a data download from another Boomer ship. I thought you might

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

want to see one of the news reports since it's about your old ship."

Reed's pulse quickened. It could only be news about Enterprise. As the first officer held out a data disk, Reed, wide awake now, got to his feet to take it.

"Thanks, Mr. Smyser. I appreciate it." Reed impatiently tapped the disk against his hand.

"No problem," Smyser said. "And it's Fred. We don't stand much on ceremony around here."

"Thanks, Fred," Reed said. He was curious to see the disk's contents. It had been more than three weeks since he'd resigned his commission and taken his leave from Enterprise to set out on his own personal mission. In his time on the Sanctuary, he hadn't heard a peep from his former crewmates. That was for the best, he knew. There might be a need in the future for plausible deniability on their part. But he couldn't deny that he missed everyone, particularly Tucker, who would have had a few choice words of advice for Reed about his crawling through this ship's innards.

"By the way," Smyser said, "we really could use your help again tomorrow. The plasma cutoff valves have been acting up."

"I'd be happy to help," Reed said. Holding up the disk, he said pointedly, "If you don't mind..."

"Of course," Smyser said, turning to step through the doorway. His hand on the jamb, he hesitated. "If you change your mind, we could use someone with your skills full-time aboard Sanctuary."

Reed mustered what he hoped was a sincere smile. "I wish I could oblige you, but I have other matters to



## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

attend to once we reach Earth."

"Can't say I didn't try," Smyser said good-naturedly, and he stepped out into the corridor, allowing the door to shut.

Reed inserted the disk into the reader on the desk. He had been lucky to get a cabin to himself and thereby have a minimum of privacy. When he'd left Enterprise, he'd signed on as a passenger on the Boomer ship to get back to Earth. As soon as the ship's captain had realized there was a former Starfleet officer on board, however, Reed had found himself helping out with much-needed maintenance and repairs. Reed took his room in exchange, paying only board and air fees. He didn't particularly mind working, as it passed the time and kept him from brooding about what he had to do when he reached his destination.

Unfortunately, the slow journey was taking even longer than Reed had anticipated. The Sanctuary's route to Earth was a circuitous one, with stops at outposts and colonies to drop off and take on cargo. The only advantage in the long trip was that it was giving him the opportunity to directly access the Boomers' information-gathering network. To obtain permission to look at that data, he'd had to tell the Sanctuary's captain and first officer he was looking into previous unauthorized use of the network by parties unknown, but he believed both men were trustworthy. What he could gain might well outweigh the risk of them knowing even that little bit about his true reason for resigning.

Reed sat down at the desk and started the disk's

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

playback. A wide view of Starfleet's spacedock filled the screen. A battered Enterprise was shown using maneuvering thrusters to ease into a berth. Reed knew that was about all the starship could do. He could just make out the Vulcan ship that had towed Enterprise home off to one side in the picture. Flashing text in the corner of the screen indicated the report was initially broadcast two weeks ago.

"Just back from its ill-fated visit to Alpha Centauri, the pride of Starfleet limped into spacedock with little fanfare," the voice of an announcer intoned solemnly.

Reed winced in sympathy as the scene shifted to a series of pictures of the ravaged hull, including one of a gaping wound that was open to the vacuum of space. The damage from the unexpected Romulan attack at the Alpha Centauri trade talks had been too severe to repair without a return to Earth. Reed figured if Enterprise had been in spacedock for two weeks, a significant amount of the repair work should have been done by now.

"Approximately one quarter of the crew was killed in the unprovoked attack," the pleasant female voice continued, "and Starfleet officials have yet to say when they expect Enterprise to be back in space, or whether Captain Jonathan Archer will remain in command."

The announcer went on to recap the events: the attack by a Romulan ship that had killed many of the delegates to the trade talks and the singling out of Enterprise for a brutal mauling, the subsequent breakdown

## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

of the talks, and Alpha Centauri severing all connections with Earth, leading other potential allies to decline establishing ties with Earth as well.

As the scene shifted to a view of Archer in front of a horde of journalists, Reed felt a pang of remorse. He'd spent a lot of his free time on the Sanctuary second-guessing his decision to cut his ties to Enterprise and Starfleet, and what he was watching only emphasized that he'd left when he'd been needed. Shrugging off his regret, he concentrated on the screen, watching Archer as he responded to questions.

Once he was back on Earth, Reed could work toward finding out if Admiral Boone was a traitor and how deep the corruption had infiltrated Starfleet. He'd have no doubts then about what he would have to do. But before that, he needed information. Now that he was a free agent, unencumbered by rules and regulations, he'd be able to get it. And after he had obtained that information, he'd act on it.

He didn't want to become an assassin, but if that was what was needed, he would do it.



# CHAPTER

## 2

Captain Jonathan Archer wended his way past crewmen making repairs, ducking out of the way as sparks arced through the air. He was in the corridor leading to Engineering, but it was the same all over the ship. Although he'd called in some favors to get extra repair crews on board, there was much to be done before Enterprise was back at one hundred percent.

One hundred percent in more ways than one, Archer amended silently with a scowl that sent a junior-level crewman scurrying out of the way after just a glimpse of his face. Not only had the ship been badly damaged, but he'd lost a good portion of his crew. They were people who had deserved better than to be killed in an unprovoked sneak attack. It still made his blood pressure spike every time he thought about it.

He was working on finding replacements for his decimated crew, but one area was giving him trouble.

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

His command staff had been severely reduced -- not by death, but by other means of attrition. He didn't know who he was going to get to replace T'Pol as science officer now that she had taken over for Soval as the Vulcan ambassador to Earth. Reed's resignation as tactical and security officer had also left a void that was going to be hard to fill.

But he had the perfect person to step in as first officer, a position also left vacant by T'Pol's departure. Unfortunately, that person seemed to be having a hard time tearing himself away from his former duties.

The hatch to Engineering was open and Archer stepped through to be greeted by the same chaos as out in the corridor. If anything, it was even noisier in here, with twice the usual number of people working on repairs and upgrades. The personnel at the spacedock had been ready to jump right in when Enterprise had arrived two weeks ago and had been hard at work ever since. But despite the progress, sometimes it seemed like there was no end in sight.

Archer let the sounds of the controlled pandemonium wash over him as he scanned the area. He made no attempt to make sense of the confusion; he had his own problems to solve, and until a new chief engineer was named, it was Tucker's responsibility. And speaking of Tucker -- he was nowhere in sight. Then Archer heard the familiar drawl coming from around the side of the warp engine.

Repressing a sigh, he headed in that direction, sidestepping another small knot of people working on repairs. He found Tucker, his hair mussed and his

## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

sleeves pushed up, lecturing a tired-looking engineering tech at one of the monitoring stations next to the engine.

"Commander Tucker," Archer called out, overriding Tucker's steady stream of instructions. He wasn't sure whether Tucker had seen him and was ignoring him, or had simply not noticed him. So he called out louder, "I need to speak to you."

Tucker didn't look at him as he held up a hand. "Just a second, Cap'n," he said as he punched something into a panel.

Annoyed by Tucker's lackadaisical response, Archer said testily, "Now, Commander."

That got through. Tucker halted, his hand hovering over the touchpad. "Sure thing, Cap'n." Addressing the technician, he said, "Keep at it, but be more careful this time."

Archer motioned for Tucker to follow, and led him to a relatively quiet corner of Engineering where he turned to face him. "Is there a problem?" he asked, his gaze going back to the chastised technician now working diligently at the panel.

"No, not really," Tucker said. "Just having some trouble with a few of the parts we're trying to replace."

Archer turned his stern glare on Tucker. "You were supposed to be at the briefing at 1300," he snapped. "That was more than two hours ago."

"Sorry." Tucker looked sheepish. "I guess I got caught up on workin' on some of the things down here--"

"Trip!" Archer exclaimed, then took a deep breath

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

to calm himself. He knew that Tucker tended to lose track of time when he got involved in a problem, but the man had to learn how to delegate. "I know there's a lot of work to be done, but I need you at these meetings."

"But surely--"

"No 'buts,' Trip," Archer said. "This is the third time you've missed a briefing. I need you to start taking an active role as my first officer. I need someone in that position I can count on, who can back me up when I talk to the brass."

Tucker hung his head. "I'm sorry," he said. "It's just that the old girl is in such bad shape that it tears me up. I can't stand to see her like this." He laid a hand almost lovingly against the bulkhead. "And if I keep busy, it helps keep my mind off other things." He looked away, but not quickly enough to prevent Archer from seeing the melancholy on his face.

Archer felt some of his irritation melt. Tucker was right. It was hard seeing the ship the way it was right now. It was even harder knowing that close to twenty-five people they'd worked with day in and day out were dead. When they'd been in the Expanse, they'd known they could have been killed at any moment and had tried to mentally prepare themselves for it. But the losses there hadn't been nearly as bad as this. And to lose those people in such an unexpected manner! Archer gritted his teeth, aware that his anger at something he'd had no control over wasn't helping him in this situation. He needed to concentrate on what he could control.



## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

His anger faded, only to be replaced by a dull stab of regret. Not everyone who was gone had died. A number of crew members had requested transfers. After what they'd been through, he couldn't blame them. But it was making it even harder to restaff Enterprise, because there wasn't a large pool of replacements from which to draw.

And then there were the people who'd left for other reasons. He considered them his friends, or at least as close to friends as he could allow himself as captain. He missed T'Pol's unflappable demeanor and quiet, efficient expertise. He missed Reed's steady and confident presence at tactical. He even missed Phlox's annoyingly effervescent personality. The Denobulan physician had been returned to his home planet after going into a catatonic state at the death of one of his wives and another of her husbands in the attack at Alpha Centauri.

"I understand, Trip," Archer said, not unsympathetically, "but I need you to get busy as first officer." He paused only momentarily at the hang-dog expression on Tucker's face. "Have you picked out a new chief of Engineering?"

"Not yet," Tucker replied. "I kinda want to avoid the situation that occurred when Kelby took over. You know, him resentin' me being around. The only thing I do know is that when you and I are both on duty, I'll be manning the Engineering console on the bridge."

Normally, if both the captain and his first officer were on the bridge at the same time, a first officer wouldn't be doing much unless the captain ordered

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

him to do something. The first officer had to be ready to step in at any time. Just because T'Pol had been able to handle both first officer and science officer duties at the same time didn't mean a human could. But Archer understood the need to be useful. Tucker could monitor Engineering from the bridge and still be an adequate first officer.

"I need your recommendation for chief engineer soon," Archer insisted.

"I know. I've got some people in mind," Tucker said. "What about you? Have you picked out a new science officer?"

Archer frowned. There was no one left on board who was qualified, and so he'd gone over the roster of available Starfleet officers. He hadn't been impressed. "Not yet," he admitted grudgingly. "I'm still looking."

Tucker looked like he was trying not to grin. "What about Malcolm's old job?"

"Still looking," Archer said shortly.

His expression warned Tucker not to comment, although for a moment Archer thought the younger man was going to clap him on the shoulder. But Tucker hesitated, his hand upraised, and quickly changed it to an "after you" gesture.

"Let's get up to your ready room," he said, "and look over the lists of candidates."

Archer responded with a sardonic smile and led the way out of Engineering.

# CHAPTER

## 3

Ensign Hoshi Sato was standing in front of the helm console, trying to keep out of the way of the repair team working nearby at the communications station. She could have been helping, but the techs had made it abundantly clear they could work faster without her. Still, it was her station. She was going to keep an eye on them.

"I'll be glad when they're done and out of here," Ensign Travis Mayweather said from his seat at the helm.

Mayweather's station wasn't being worked on at the moment, although every other station on the bridge was. Sato wasn't even sure why the pilot was on the bridge. After all, they were in spacedock. Some sort of proprietary interest, she guessed, because she felt the same way.

"They won't be done soon enough for me," she

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

said loudly, not caring if the repair techs heard her.

Mayweather shifted in his seat, trying to get a better view of what was going on at the communications station. "You have to admit they seem to know what they're doing," he pointed out.

Sato snorted. The techs might know what they were doing, but they weren't doing it fast enough to suit her. As soon as they were finished, she intended to tear the whole console apart and put it back together. That was the best way she'd found to learn how everything fit together, and she'd rather not be worrying whether or not cross-connecting a particular circuit to bypass a short would mess up the whole console while they were being shot at.

Mayweather gestured for her to come closer and asked, "How come you're still on board? Don't you want to see your family?"

Sato crossed her arms over her chest and leaned against his console. "I made a trip down to see them when we got back. I only lasted two days." She shook her head at the memory. "I couldn't wait to get back on board. It just...I don't know...it feels like I should be here right now."

Mayweather nodded sympathetically. "I know what you mean. I feel like there's something about to happen, and I don't want to miss it."

Sato gave him a lopsided smile. "There's that. And I feel like Captain Archer needs me here. With so many of the others gone..." Her smile faded as she glanced around the bridge.

Mayweather followed her gaze. "Yeah. It's strange

## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

to look over at the science station and not see T'Pol, or turn around and see somebody besides Malcolm sitting there."

"I think I miss Phlox the most." Sato sighed. She and the ebullient physican had often had breakfast together, and she missed his earnest curiosity. "You could almost always count on him to be cheerful." She sighed again. "There's not much cheer around here any more."

The two ensigns broke off their conversation when the door to the turbolift opened to discharge Archer and Tucker. They watched as the two men, talking intently, walked across the bridge and into the ready room.

"Looks like the captain had to round up his new first officer -- again," Mayweather said with a grin.

"At least he's got a first officer," Sato said. "I don't think he's ever going to find a science officer. I was with him when he was going over some of the profiles of potential science officers. They seemed pretty good to me but he kept comparing them to T'Pol."



# CHAPTER

## 4

Archer was seated at his desk in the ready room. Tucker was ensconced on the small couch. Data PADDs containing the profiles of science officers were strewn around each man. But every time Tucker suggested a likely candidate, Archer shot him down.

"Here's a good one," Tucker said hopefully, perusing the information on a PADD he was holding. "Graduated with top honors in chemistry. Did two internships, and turned down a job offer in private industry in favor of going through Starfleet training."

Archer shook his head. "I looked at that one. Not only is he a little young, he's too much of a loner. We need a team player." He returned his attention to the PADD he was holding.

Tucker's brow knitted in a mixture of confusion and exasperation. "If you've already looked at all these and rejected them, then why am I looking at them?"

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

"I thought maybe you might see something in one of them that I missed," Archer admitted. He tossed his PADD aside and rubbed his eyes.

"What if we just get the science department back up to a full staff and rotate those people on bridge duty?" Tucker suggested, only half in jest. "Maybe you'll find someone you like to run the department."

Archer gazed off at nothing as he thought about that. "You know, that just might work," he said at last. "I could see how well all of them can handle the position and make a decision after that." He nodded approvingly at Tucker. "See? I knew there was some reason I wanted you to be my first officer."

A grin lit the erstwhile engineer's face as he started to get to his feet. "Glad I could help," he said

"Wait a minute!" Archer said, sorting through another pile of PADDs on his desk. "We're not done here. I want you to look at this candidate for Malcolm's job."

Tucker settled himself on the couch again and took the PADD Archer held out. When he finished reading the information on the screen, he looked dubiously at Archer. "Lieutenant Victoria Collins? Wasn't she in charge of Starfleet's investigation when Phlox was kidnapped to help the Klingons with that Augment disease? She's more of a pain in the ass than Malcolm!"

"I wouldn't call her that, but she does have a certain...confidence in her abilities," Archer replied with a straight face.

The two men stared at each other for a moment before they both burst out laughing.



## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

Tucker shook his head. "You're trying to find someone to 'out- Malcolm' Malcolm."

"I've learned it's good to have someone with a suspicious nature as tactical officer," Archer said dryly. Waving his hand vaguely at the PADDs littering his ready room, he added, "This is all hypothetical, you know."

"The admiral hasn't made a decision?" Tucker asked.

Archer shook his head. It was a frustrating situation. He had to go on the assumption that Enterprise would return to space as soon as possible with him as her captain. But the brass at Starfleet hadn't said anything about his next assignment, whether it be continuing to command Enterprise or something else entirely.

Now that they had the information-gathering system from the Boomer ships working in their favor, Archer needed to be on Enterprise to collect that data. It was too risky for the Boomers to send it to Earth where it might be intercepted by the wrong party. No one in Starfleet outside of his own senior staff knew about the network, and Archer was determined to keep it that way.

How they'd come to find out about the information-gathering system and their disinclination to tell Starfleet about it was a twisted story full of cloak-and-dagger intrigue. It had started last year when Tucker had secretly been held captive at Starbase 1. Information had been planted in his brain without his knowledge at the instigation of a shady organization

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

connected to Starfleet Intelligence, the same group for which Reed had worked early in his career.

Later, in a deal set up by Harris, Reed's former boss in that covert group, the information was extracted by a Klingon. The Klingon had in turn passed the information over to the Boomer Alliance, the loose conglomeration of Earth cargo ship operators who traveled between worlds. It wasn't until the attack on Alpha Centauri -- when Tucker had been kidnapped again -- that they'd found out the information in his brain was a transponder frequency code that allowed access to important data such as location, status and contacts of all Boomer ships. That information was supposedly to be sent back to Starfleet Intelligence, but there were good indications it would go to a traitor who would give it to the Romulans.

Both Archer and Tucker knew what was being left unsaid. If Archer was off somewhere on Enterprise and not on Earth pursuing a more thorough investigation of what had happened at Alpha Centauri, it might give Admiral Boone, the alleged Romulan connection in Starfleet, enough false confidence to slip up. Then it would be up to Reed to catch him.

"There's a briefing at 1000 tomorrow with Admiral Williams," Archer told Tucker. "I expect you to be there."

Archer believed there was a good chance the admiral would tell him if he'd still be in command of Enterprise. It wasn't just personal preference driving Archer's desire to remain in command of Enterprise. He absolutely had to have the autonomy the ship provided

## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

him so he could contact the Boomers. If the admiral tried to give him any other assignment, he'd have to put up a good fight. And he most definitely needed Tucker there to back him up.

This time when Tucker got to his feet, Archer didn't try to stop him. The reluctant first officer made it out of the ready room, the door sliding shut behind him, before Archer realized Tucker hadn't told him who he'd recommend for chief engineer.

Out on the bridge, Mayweather called out Tucker's name as he strode toward the turbolift.

Tucker stopped and turned to look at the helmsman. "Yeah, Travis? What can I do for you?"

"I was just wondering," Mayweather said. "Has Captain Archer decided on a new science officer yet?"

Tucker shook his head. "No. Any particular reason you wanna know?"

"No reason, really," Mayweather said. "Just curious."

Tucker accepted this explanation and boarded the turbolift. As the door closed, Sato, now busy tinkering with her new and improved communications console, paused to look over at Mayweather and said, "I told you."



# CHAPTER

## 5

Archer and Tucker arrived outside the door to Admiral Williams's office. Archer noted approvingly that Tucker didn't have a speck of engine grease on him. Earlier he'd been wondering if he'd have to track him down in Engineering again, but Tucker had surprised him. He'd shown up in the launch bay at the shuttlepod's scheduled departure time. He hoped it was a sign that Tucker was finally starting to take his first officer duties seriously.

Now, with his hand ready to push the control to open the door to the admiral's office, Archer said, "Remember, I need you to back me up in here. No displays of temper or any smart remarks."

"Saving that for yourself?" Tucker asked with a straight face.

Archer narrowed his eyes as a last warning to the incorrigible officer and opened the door. Stepping into

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

the room, he was painfully struck by the fact that he probably would always expect to see Admiral Forrest when he paid a visit to this office. But the man who had been both his mentor and his superior officer had been killed almost two years ago in an explosion at Earth's embassy on Vulcan. Archer now reported to Williams, and he was keenly aware he did not have the rapport with this man that he'd developed with Forrest.

"Jon! Come in!" said Williams cordially from his seat behind the desk. He gestured to a pair of chairs, tacitly inviting them to sit.

The admiral's use of his first name rankled. Although it was the admiral's right to call a subordinate by his given name, it implied a familiarity that, as far as Archer was concerned, didn't exist. He couldn't help but make a comparison. While Forrest had been a father figure to him, this man was nothing more than his boss -- one he wasn't even sure he liked. Worst of all, Williams had a reputation as a person who stuck to his decisions no matter what other circumstances might dictate. Forrest had always been willing to listen and was open to changing his mind if presented with new facts or a well-reasoned argument.

As Archer and Tucker settled into chairs in front of his desk, Williams began, "We've thoroughly covered what happened at Alpha Centauri, and we've gone over the repairs needed to make Enterprise fully operational again, but we haven't talked about what's going to happen next. I know you're making plans to get your crew back up to a full complement." He held up his hand, forestalling Archer who had opened his

## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

mouth to reply, and continued, "Getting a crew together is commendable, but a bit premature on your part."

The admiral stood and turned to face the window behind him, his lantern jaw jutting out in profile as he took in the sweeping view of the Starfleet Headquarters' grounds.

Tucker looked at Archer and raised his eyebrows quizzically. Archer shrugged in return and tried not to fidget. The admiral was finally going to tell him his next assignment, but he was getting the impression it was going to be something he didn't want to hear.

Without turning around, Williams said, "The opinion at Starfleet Command is that both of you should remain on Earth indefinitely."

From the corner of his eye, Archer could see Tucker's hands clench into fists. He himself was gripping the armrests of his chair to keep from jumping to his feet. "Why is that, sir?" he managed to get out in a deceptively normal tone of voice.

"There are a number of reasons," Williams said, still gazing out the window. "Some people on the command staff think you'd both serve a better purpose here, overseeing the construction of new starships, two of which are to be launched by the end of this year."

Williams finally turned around and looked at Archer. "While construction would primarily be Commander Tucker's responsibility, you'd be invaluable as a resource to the other captains and crews. You'd be able to tell them what to expect, what you've learned to do and what not to do... that sort of thing. You'd

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

eventually become the liaison between Starfleet Command and ships in the field." At Archer's stony expression, he added, "With a suitable promotion, of course."

Williams scratched his jaw and looked away. His body language set off warning bells in Archer's mind: he didn't want to face Archer down. "Then, of course, there's Starfleet's reputation to think of. A portion of the population thinks Starfleet in general, and you in particular, have done enough damage--"

"Damage!" Archer said, leaning forward as indignation made his spine stiffen.

"-- to Earth's reputation," Williams said, his voice raised over Archer's. "They point to the attack at Alpha Centauri as the latest in a line of disasters for which they see you as at least partially responsible. They blame you and your crew for the Xindi attack on Earth--"

"Not that again," Tucker muttered disgustedly.

Williams paused to glare at Tucker for the interruption, then continued. "I know, and you know, that's not true. But they're looking for a scapegoat."

"So you're going to give them a sacrifice -- Commander Tucker and me -- to appease them?" Archer asked incredulously. No wonder Williams couldn't look him in the eye. Archer's future hung on Williams's need to make a symbolic gesture, and they both knew it.

Williams sat down behind his desk, clasped his hands together on the desktop, and, at long last, looked Archer squarely in the eye. "Convince me I shouldn't



## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

do what they want," he said.

Heartened as well as somewhat taken aback by the admiral's willingness to listen, Archer tried to rein in his anger. Throwing a tantrum wouldn't do any good. He didn't dare look at Tucker, especially since he'd made that crack about not losing his temper right before entering Williams's office.

"With all due respect, Admiral," he began, "I'm sure Commander Tucker and I could do a good job here on Earth with those duties you mentioned, but we can do an even better job where we are right now. Enterprise is a familiar presence among our allies--"

"What few we have left," Tucker put in softly.

Williams didn't change expression but Archer shot Tucker a warning glare.

"I personally have made contact with many people of influence in other species and cultures," Archer said. "They would be more comfortable with me than with anyone else Starfleet could send to contact them. I'm known to them. In addition, I'm familiar with their customs, and I can respect what's important to them."

"What you're saying is that someone unfamiliar with their cultures might make an embarrassing mistake," Williams said, "at a time when we don't need to make any mistakes."

"Yes, sir," Archer said. "It's imperative that we keep in contact with the allies we have. We can't let them think we're withdrawing into isolationism, not when we need to convince them there is strength in numbers. On that same point, it would be a mistake to let the Romulans think they've cowed us. It would be

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

playing right into their hands. They're trying to keep us weak by thwarting our attempts to make alliances, while they continue to grow stronger through intimidation. They're trying to dictate what we should do."

"What else?" the admiral prompted.

Momentarily at a loss, Archer wondered if it was safe to broach the subject of the Boomer information-gathering network, then immediately nixed the idea. Williams might feel it was his duty to inform Admiral Boone, the head of Starfleet Intelligence, about such a system. But the last thing Archer wanted was for Boone to be alerted that the information-gathering system he'd tried to usurp was now being used against him and the Romulans.

Tucker suddenly sat up straighter in his chair and cleared his throat. "Well, sir," he said, "in addition to his experience, Captain Archer has a reputation as a fair and honest man among the other species out there. The Andorians wanted him to mediate their conflict over that planet with the Vulcans, for instance. If there's one human that a lot of aliens trust to deal honorably with them, it's Captain Archer. He's the best representative of humankind that you can send out there."

Having said his piece, Tucker looked slightly embarrassed, slumped back down his chair, and lapsed into silence.

The hint of a smile crossed Williams's face. "What about you, Commander Tucker? Why shouldn't you stay here while Captain Archer takes Enterprise out?"

Tucker's mouth opened a few times, making him look like a fish out of water, until Archer spoke up.

## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

Tucker had backed him up; it was time for him to return the favor.

"He needs to be on Enterprise because I need him there," Archer said firmly. "I've lost several of my command staff, and I've already moved Commander Tucker up to the position of first officer. I need to have at least a few senior officers I know and can trust right from the start. A good working relationship and teamwork don't happen overnight."

Williams let his gaze shift back and forth between the two officers. Archer found himself once again tightly grasping the armrests as he awaited the admiral's decision. He made a conscious effort to loosen his grip, lest his white knuckles give away his anxiety.

Williams suddenly slapped the desktop with both hands, causing the two officers facing him to start. "That's all for now," he said. "You're dismissed."

"Sir?" Archer asked.

"You've made a good case, Jon," Williams said. "I need to think about it. I'll let you know as soon as I reach a decision."

Much as Archer would have liked to continue pressing his case, he knew when it was time to back off. "Yes, sir," he said, getting to his feet with Tucker following suit.

"In the meantime," Williams said as the two men headed for the door, "keep doing what you're doing. Someone will have to take Enterprise out eventually."

At this statement, both Archer and Tucker turned to look at him, but Williams was looking out the window again.

## **ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6**

"Yes, sir," Archer said, not quite sure what to think as he and Tucker walked out of the office.

# CHAPTER

## 6

The mess hall was unnaturally quiet compared to the bustle of the rest of the ship. There wasn't a soul in the place when Mayweather entered. He went over to the food cabinet and picked out a plate of chicken alfredo, then took a seat at the closest table.

In a tradition that went back to the U.S. navy ships of the twentieth century, the food on Enterprise was generally good as well as plentiful. One bite, however, was enough to tell Mayweather that Chef wasn't in charge of the galley at the moment. Although there was more than enough on his plate to satisfy his hunger, he wasn't sure it qualified as "good."

He pushed the soggy pasta around, trying to work up the desire to take a second bite. He hoped Chef was enjoying shore leave and hadn't transferred. That's the last thing they needed. He couldn't imagine someone so important to the crew's morale not coming back. If

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

the quality of the food went into a sudden decline because Chef had decided to take off permanently, Mayweather didn't want to be around when the rest of the crew found out. Mutinies had been provoked by less.

With a sigh, he put down his fork. He knew it wasn't the lackluster fare that was bothering him. What was really wrong was that he was restless. The last few days had been filled with nothing but watching other people work. There was also the uncertainty about what their next assignment would be. Mayweather expected Enterprise to be sent back out with a new mission, but the waiting was starting to get to him.

To take his mind off matters, maybe he ought to make a quick trip down to the Chinese restaurant in San Francisco that Sato was always raving about. There was no reason he couldn't go. Shuttles were constantly running back and forth between spacedock and Earth, bringing up supplies and maintenance workers, and taking Enterprise crew members to meetings and R&R. He could easily get a ride on one. Maybe Sato would want to go with him.

He'd just pushed his plate aside, thinking he'd go find Sato, when the mess hall door opened. A tall man he didn't recognize entered, glanced around, and headed for the food cabinet. The man's uniform had the blue stripe for science and medicine. He could be one of the replacements, Mayweather mused, but he seemed much older than the average crew member. His hair was iron gray, there were weathered wrinkles on

## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

his cheeks and around his eyes, and the beginnings of a spare tire were visible at his waist.

The mystery was solved when the man, plate in hand, turned around to face the room. Mayweather could see a caduceus in addition to rank insignia pins for lieutenant commander. The medical symbol meant the newcomer had to be the ship's new doctor.

Mayweather hadn't heard anything about the newcomer, other than that the captain had finally gotten someone to fill the medical position. Curious to find out more, Mayweather caught the man's eye and gestured for him to approach.

"Welcome aboard," Mayweather said, getting to his feet and introducing himself.

The man set his plate on the table and grasped Mayweather's outstretched hand, giving it a hearty shake. "Ensign," he said, his voice a pleasant baritone. "I'm Doctor Weber."

"I thought so. The doctor part, I mean, " Mayweather said, pointing to the caduceus on the other man's uniform. "Have a seat."

The two men sat and Weber spread a napkin over his lap. "Are you the one-man welcoming committee?" he asked before putting a forkful of the same pasta that Mayweather had rejected in his mouth.

"That's me," Mayweather said with a grin. "Normally I'm the helmsman, but since we aren't going anywhere at the moment..." He stretched his arms out. "Welcoming committee."

Weber swallowed. "Well, thanks -- it's much appreciated." He glanced at Mayweather's barely tou-

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

ched plate, then pointed to his own with his fork. "Is there something wrong with this?"

"Oh, no!" Mayweather said. "I'm sure it's fine. It's just not up to the usual standards. ... So you'll be taking over sickbay?"

"Cleaning it up is more like it," Weber said. Before Mayweather could ask what he meant, the doctor put down his fork and looked around. "I seem to have forgotten to get a glass of water."

Offering to get the doctor his drink, Mayweather quickly got to his feet. He went to the beverage dispenser, gave the verbal order, and was waiting for the glass to fill when Sato entered the mess hall. Motioning her over, he said, "The new doctor's here. Come over and meet him. It will distract you from how bad the food is."

"Chef's not back yet?" she asked, only to have Mayweather shake his head. "Old-timers are getting a little scarce around here."

Mayweather took the glass out of the beverage dispenser. He leaned closer to Sato and, lowering his voice, said, "Speaking of old, I'm not sure, but I think our new doctor might be the oldest person on board."



# CHAPTER

## 7

Tucker was in his quarters, lying on his side in his bunk, going over the Engineering staff roster one more time. He was tempted to try what he had suggested to the captain. Just like they'd decided to rotate science personnel through the lead position for that department, maybe he could rotate some of his more experienced staff through the chief engineer position.

Naw, he thought, tossing aside the PADD and yawning. He couldn't do that even if the captain would let him, which he seriously doubted. It would be like running Engineering by committee, not to mention that it would cause unnecessary competition among his staff. They'd all be trying to outdo each other when it was their turn to be in charge, and it would be the Kelby thing all over again, except they'd all be jealous of each other instead of him.

Tucker understood Archer's need for him to take

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

over as first officer. Heck, he was supposed to have been first officer in addition to chief engineer before T'Pol had been foisted on them by the Vulcans. But five years on Enterprise had shown that a chief engineer had too many things with which to occupy himself to be expected to perform first officer duties on top of it -- not without some major delegation, and he couldn't bring himself to do that. In the past, there had been many occasions when he'd been in command of the ship, but whenever he'd done it, a part of him had always been down in Engineering. He had to admit it was his first love. He knew why Archer had chosen to move him up, but he'd give up the first officership in a shot if he could just go back to being the plain old chief engineer.

Even now he found himself thinking more about Engineering than Enterprise as a whole. Yes, the ship had been hurt badly and she was being brought back up to snuff, but recent advances would help tweak her performance even more. Sustainable Warp 6 was a distinct possibility. He wanted to be in the thick of the work so badly it was almost a physical yearning.

He supposed he could blame T'Pol for his current predicament. Heaven knew he'd blamed her for enough things, first and foremost his demotion to second officer when she'd originally come aboard. If only he'd known then how much more satisfying it was to concentrate on the engine and not be distracted by all this administrative paperwork, he would have thanked her for barging in.

He couldn't fault her for taking over for Soval as

## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

Vulcan ambassador to Earth, however. It was a big step up for her and more in keeping with what her goals had been five years ago. But for some reason, he'd thought she'd stay on Enterprise.

Tucker lay back, cradling his head in his hands. T'Pol had stayed after they'd lost their child. It didn't matter that Elizabeth had been created without their knowledge. The baby had been theirs, and they'd both acknowledged the infant as such. Although Vulcans didn't show emotion, they felt it, and Tucker knew that T'Pol had been just as devastated as he by the death of their daughter. When T'Pol hadn't left then, he'd thought nothing could make her leave.

With a sigh, he got to his feet. All this introspection was making him depressed. He'd take a turn around Engineering and see what was going on. Maybe he'd be inspired to pick a new chief engineer.



# CHAPTER

## 8

"Doctor Weber said what?!"

Sato glared at Mayweather as he shushed her. They were headed to the turbolift on their way to the bridge for another long shift of doing nothing.

"He wants all of Phlox's creatures out of sickbay," Mayweather said in a conspiratorial tone.

Sato knew Phlox's animals weren't appreciated by everyone, but getting rid of them just seemed wrong. "But why?" she asked with a frown.

"He doesn't need them," Mayweather answered. "He said he didn't have the first idea what to do with them. He's never heard of a Pyrithian bat or Regular bloodworms."

Sato knew Phlox's use of the creatures was not in keeping with typical human medical practices, but the longtime crew members had gotten used to his unorthodox methods of treatment. Most of them didn't

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

even blink when Phlox would suggest using his osmotic eels to cauterize a wound, for example. As for herself, she couldn't imagine walking into sickbay and not hearing all the chirping and twittering.

"So many things around here are changing," Sato said with a rueful shake of her head. She glanced sharply at her companion. "Did Doctor Weber say what he's going to do with all the animals?"

Mayweather shrugged as, arriving at the turbolift, he pushed the button to summon it

Thinking out loud, Sato said, "I've been taking care of them since Phlox left. Maybe I should offer to keep taking care of them and we can keep them on board. It would be a nice remembrance of Phlox to have around."

"I don't know," Mayweather said doubtfully as they boarded the 'lift. "Doctor Weber was pretty adamant about getting them out of sickbay as soon as possible."

"I'll talk to the captain," Sato said as the turbolift began to move. "Maybe we can put them somewhere else on the ship."

A short time later, Sato found Archer in his quarters. He had much the same reaction as she had to the news that Doctor Weber wanted to get rid of Phlox's menagerie.

There hadn't been time to arrange for shipment of the animals when Phlox had been taken home by a Tellarite ship after the attack. Enterprise been under a deadline to leave Alpha Centauri, and Sato knew there had been more important things for Archer to worry

## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

about at the time. Like her, he'd assumed the animals would stay on board to be used at the discretion of the next doctor. But unlike her, he'd then totally forgotten about them.

She didn't think she'd have to try too hard to convince the captain. It was well known he was a soft touch where his dog was concerned. Right now, the dog in question was flopped on his back with his tongue lolling out as he got his stomach rubbed by his master. Sato hoped Porthos's presence might help the captain decide in favor of her plan.

"I did try to find other homes for them," she told him, "but the medical profession on Earth doesn't utilize them the way Phlox did, so the doctors aren't interested. And there really aren't any zoos in the old-fashioned sense of the word any more. They're more along the line of conservation facilities to promote and protect endangered Earth species, not take care of alien animals."

Archer stopped petting the beagle and looked intently at her. "You don't think Doctor Weber would...ah, you know?"

"I certainly hope not!" Sato replied indignantly, rocking slightly on the balls of her feet. "He's a doctor. Killing living things simply because you don't want them around wouldn't be ethical, would it, sir? I don't think I'd want a doctor like that on board."

"So, any ideas about what we do with them?" he asked seriously, although she could tell he'd been amused by her outburst.

"We can move them to a cargo bay," she said

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

promptly. When Archer raised an eyebrow, she said, "I don't mind taking care of them. I helped Phlox take care of them in the past. I'm taking care of them now. And maybe some time we'll visit Denobula and he can take them back."

Archer nodded in comprehension. "We could drop them off. They might help cheer Phlox up. Even that bat he was always so fond of."

"Especially the bat," Sato said with a brilliant smile as her plan fell into place. "Thank you, sir. I'll go find an appropriate place to house them right now." She turned to leave, but hesitated at the door. In a casual tone, she asked, "By the way, sir. Have you picked a new science officer?"

Archer shook his head. "Not yet. Why? Do you have someone in mind?"

Sato was not surprised by his response. The real surprise would be if they left spacedock with a full crew complement. "No, sir. I just wondered how the search for officers was going."

"I haven't been able to find someone I think would be a good fit for Enterprise as science officer." Archer, looking down at the beagle nudging his hand for more petting, missed Sato's knowing grin at his statement. "I'm meeting T'Pol for lunch at the Vulcan Embassy next week. Maybe she'll have some ideas." Looking back up at her, he added, "But our new tactical officer should be reporting for duty later today."



# CHAPTER

## 9

Sato enlisted a motley collection of crew members to carry cages, boxes, food containers and other paraphernalia to Cargo Bay 3. As people trooped in and out of sickbay, she directed the moving process under the watchful eyes of Doctor Weber.

"Take it easy with that one!" she called out to a crewman when he picked up a wire cage filled with greenery and it erupted with a flurry of squawking protests. "They don't like to be jostled."

The crewman nodded and, holding the cage at arm's length, set off slowly and gingerly for the exit. Sato shook her head and turned back to secure the next item to be moved.

"You know," Weber said from where he leaned against a counter, "I wouldn't have harmed them."

"I didn't think that you would, Doctor," Sato said diplomatically as she made sure the latch on the

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

container of Andosian slugs was closed properly.

"I just didn't want sickbay cluttered up with them."

"I understand, sir."

"I haven't the faintest idea what to do with them," he explained, "and I was afraid in a crisis situation they might be in the way."

Sato tried not to let her irritation show. The doctor didn't have to justify his decision to her. But the least he could do if he wasn't going to help was get out of the way. He didn't need to be standing there watching. Did he expect her to run off with some of the medical equipment when he wasn't looking?

Crossing his arms over his chest, Weber said matter-of-factly, "And Ensign Mayweather bet me that he could get you to move the animals for me."

Sato's head shot up as she realized she'd been manipulated. "Ensign Mayweather! Why that--" She heard Weber chuckle as she caught herself before she could say anything else.

"Don't be mad at him," Weber said placatingly. "I have a couple of degrees in psychology. Getting the animals out of sickbay was simply a matter of planting a suggestion and making sure it got to the right person. And I meant it when I said I don't know anything about these creatures. I might do them more harm than good if I tried to move them to a new home."

Despite her irritation at Mayweather -- and the doctor -- Sato smiled. "All you had to do was ask, Doctor," she admonished him.

"Maybe," Weber said with a smile of his own, "but this was more fun."

# CHAPTER

## 10

Mayweather, a tote container in hand, was leading the line of crewmen carrying boxes and crates of Phlox's animals to the cargo bay. Although it could be considered a menial task, he was enjoying himself. He was finally doing something besides sitting around watching other people work.

Rounding a curve in the corridor, he spied a blonde woman he didn't recognize walking toward them. She stopped dead in her tracks, wincing, as one of the more vocal creatures let loose a piercing shriek.

"Ensign?" she said as Mayweather drew even with her. "What's going on here?"

With a wave of his hand to the others that they should go on, Mayweather stepped out of line and said, "We're moving our previous doctor's animals from sickbay to one of the cargo bays."

"All these creatures were in sickbay?" the woman

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

asked incredulously, eyeing the various containers being carried by.

"No, sir, there's more," he responded cheerfully, enjoying her surprise. "We've got quite a few left to move."

As she watched the passing procession in disbelief, Mayweather took a good look at her. The duffle bag in her possession was a sure sign that she was a new crew member, and he'd already noted the rank insignia of lieutenant on her uniform. As he waited, aware of her higher rank and the fact that she hadn't dismissed him, he saw her visibly shake herself before she turned her attention back to him.

"Can you tell me how to get to the bridge from here?" she asked, adding sarcastically, "Unless the captain's helping with this modern-day Noah's Ark, I assume that's where he is. I'm Collins, the new tactical and security officer, and I need to report to him."

That explained why she wasn't intimidated by him towering over her, Mayweather thought. She wasn't very tall, but she had that in-your-face demeanor, seemingly inherent in security officers when they got riled up, that more than made up for it.

"The captain might be in his ready room off the bridge," he told her politely. "And if he isn't, you can report to the first officer."

"The first officer will be on the bridge, then?" she asked, pulling the strap of her duffle bag higher on her shoulder.

Mayweather pretended to consider. He found he was enjoying himself. "Well, I'm not sure. He's been

## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

spending most of his time in Engineering."

"The first officer's in Engineering," she said irritably. "Am I going to have to traipse all over this tub to report in?"

The unflattering reference to the best ship in the fleet was uncalled for, Mayweather thought, but he had been baiting her, just a little -- and she did outrank him. "Just go to the bridge," he said, trying his best to remain polite and professional, even as the cage in his hand rocked and the animal within uttered another ear-piercing shriek. Not feeling the need to mention she could use the comm to contact the captain directly, he added, "The turbolift at the end of this corridor can take you to the bridge. And if Captain Archer and Commander Tucker aren't there, our communications officer can help you get checked in."

"Checked in," she repeated, her voice rising. "What were you running here -- a starship or a hotel?"

Mayweather let that wisecrack pass, but couldn't resist annoying her a bit more. He figured he was safe in doing so since, technically, she wouldn't be one of his superiors until she reported in. "Excuse me. I was wrong," he said. "She won't be there. She's in sick-bay."

"Has she been hurt?" Collins looked as though she knew she'd regret having asked.

"No. She's in charge of moving the animals," he replied, biting back a smile as she clenched her jaw.

Mayweather figured he'd been dismissed, as the new tactical officer didn't say anything more. She just stalked off in the direction of the turbolift.



# CHAPTER

## 11

The first meeting of Archer's reconstituted senior staff -- still sans science officer and chief engineer -- took place at breakfast in the captain's mess. Archer was trying for a casual atmosphere, hoping to make the newcomers feel comfortable and allow everyone to get to know each other in an informal setting.

Doctor Weber seemed to be fitting in well. Seated at the far end of the table, Sato and Mayweather were telling him about some of the ways Phlox had used his animals to help heal the crew, and the doctor was listening avidly. Archer had heard about how Weber had conned Sato into moving the animals for him. Mayweather and Sato liked to pull pranks on each other, and in the past, Phlox had been a willing accomplice. The new doctor, however, might give Mayweather and Sato some competition in the practical joke department.

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

Tucker was sitting at his right, plowing through a generous helping of bacon and eggs as he snuck glances at a PADD on the table next to his plate. No doubt the information Tucker was looking at had something to do with the warp engine upgrades. Despite Tucker's assurances that he'd pay more attention to his duties as first officer, Archer knew his heart was still in Engineering.

Last but not least, there was Lieutenant Collins. She was listening with a distinct air of disapproval as Sato regaled Weber with a story about the time Mayweather had tricked her into believing a blob of strawberry gelatin was a living creature.

With Sato and Mayweather occupying the doctor's attention and Tucker engrossed in his PADD, Archer was left to converse with Collins who was seated to his left.

"I have several ideas for improving the security of the ship while we're in spacedock," she said.

Why couldn't security officers talk about something other than work? It's Reed all over again, Archer thought, remembering the times his former tactical officer had voiced his concern over lax security and a perceived lack of discipline. He and Reed had eventually reached a compromise. He was fairly sure he could do the same with her, although he wasn't looking forward to going through it again.

"What are your ideas?" he asked politely.

"First off, there should be a security checkpoint at the airlock," she stated. "As it is right now, anyone can wander on board and do anything they wish."



## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

Archer chewed on a piece of bacon, pretending to give her suggestion some thought. After a swallow of orange juice, he asked, "How long have you been on board, Lieutenant?"

"Since yesterday evening, sir," she replied, clearly not understanding why he was asking.

"In that short amount of time," Archer said, "have you checked out the tactical station on the bridge?"

"I went to the bridge when I first came on board, sir," she answered. "I noticed the station was manned, but I didn't inspect it."

"You should have." Archer took another bite of bacon and chewed, enjoying the confused look on her face. He swallowed and said, "The airlock entry is under surveillance. A push of a button by the crew member at the tactical console will send an armed detail to the airlock within a matter of moments. In addition, a background check is run on everyone who boards a shuttle to come to Enterprise while we're in space-dock. We know by the time they arrive if there is a reason to detain them."

Collins opened her mouth, then closed it, apparently thinking better of saying anything.

"Any other ideas?" Archer asked mildly, trying not to sound condescending.

"Well, sir, there's the matter of non-Starfleet personnel in the armory." At Archer's furrowed brow, she went on. "I saw two MACOs performing maintenance on torpedoes. They are not security personnel and shouldn't even be in the armory, much less playing with weapons they haven't been trained on."

## ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6

Archer lifted his glass and swirled the orange juice around before answering. "What if I told you that your predecessor, Lieutenant Reed, thought the same thing, but came to realize that the MACOs may need to help out in a pinch? They can't do that if they don't know the systems. The MACOs you saw were all personally trained by Lieutenant Reed."

Collins opened her mouth again only to be cut off by a call over the intercom for Archer. He leaned back in his chair, pushed the button on the panel behind him on the bulkhead, and said, "Go ahead."

The voice of the comm officer on duty came through clearly. "Admiral Williams is on the line, sir."

Archer glanced at his assembled officers. All of them were watching him with interest. He debated whether he ought to take this call in private but decided against it. If the admiral had wanted to talk to him without anyone around, he would have said so.

"Put it through down here," Archer said.

Williams's voice came through next. "Jon, I wanted you to be the first to know. I've reached a decision on Enterprise's next assignment."

Archer, intensely aware of everyone's eyes on him, said only, "Sir?"

"As soon as repairs and upgrades are finished, Enterprise will be heading back out. Not on a mission of exploration, but something much more vital. You are to contact our allies and reassure them of our resolve to stand against the Romulan threat, as well as relay that Earth will assist anyone who wishes to join us in this endeavor."

## MISSING PIECES, PART ONE

Archer glanced at the faces of his senior staff. They appeared pleased, although it was hard to tell with Collins.

Turning back to the comm panel, he said, "Sir? You said, 'You are to contact.' Does this mean...?"

"Yes, Jon. You will be in command of Enterprise when she pulls out of spacedock -- within a few weeks, if you can get repairs done."

"Thank you, sir," Archer said, unable to keep the grin off his face as the tension that had built up over the last several weeks as he'd wondered about the future of his career fell away.

"I'll set up a meeting later to go over all the details. Williams out."

Archer managed to thumb the connection off before Tucker, Mayweather and Sato burst out in happy exclamations and applause. Weber was smiling, he noticed. Collins just looked bemused.

As the clamor died down, Archer picked up his fork, and said, "Well, what are you waiting for? Eat up and get back to work. We've still got a lot to do before we can leave spacedock, and I don't want to be here a minute longer than necessary."

*To be continued...*



# — STAR TREK — ENTERPRISE

## **Missing Pieces Part One**

As Enterprise undergoes repairs, Archer attempts to replace missing staff members, even as Starfleet hints that Archer may be removed from command.

At the eve of creating the interstellar alliance, a new adventure begins for the NX-01 Enterprise crew, by Kathy Rose.

**ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SEASON 6**