



Typhon Pact #1: Zero Sum Game (Star Trek- Typhon Pact)

By David Mack

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Bashir and Douglas are sent to infiltrate the mysterious species known as the Breen, find the hidden slipstream project, and destroy it. Meanwhile, light-years away, Captain Ezri Dax and her crew on the *U.S.S. Aventine* play a dangerous game of cat and mouse with a Typhon Pact fleet that stands between them and the safe retrieval of Bashir and Douglas from hostile territory.

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“Intruder alert! Lock down all decks! This is not a drill!”

The warning repeated and echoed through the corridors of the Utopia Planitia Fleet Yards’ command facility. Red lights flashed on bulkhead panels, and pressure doors started to roll closed, partitioning the space station.

Ensign Fyyl tried to block out the cacophony of deep, buzzing alarms as he sprinted toward his post, phaser in hand. Was it an attack? Fyyl had no idea what was happening. The skinny young Bolian was less than a year out of Starfleet Academy and until that moment had counted himself lucky to have been posted to the security detail on a platform orbiting Mars, one of the safest assignments in the Federation. Now it seemed as if he was in the thick of the action—the last place he’d ever wanted to be.

He stumbled to a halt in front of a companel. With trembling fingers he punched in his security code, confirmed his section was secure, and requested new orders. A multilevel schematic appeared on the display. In real time, sections of the station switched from yellow to green as deck officers and patrolling security personnel such as Fyyl checked in. Then a number of sections turned red, and the chief of security directed all his teams to converge on the intruder.

Here we go, Fyyl thought, sprinting from the companel to the nearest intersection. Courtesy of the station’s active sensor network, the junction’s airtight hatch slid open ahead of him and rolled shut behind him once he’d passed into the next section. Through the windows lining each tube-shaped passage he saw other security personnel moving toward the core ring ahead.

Then he winced at the searing flash of phaser beams slicing through the air and steeled himself for the worst as he charged through the next doorway into the thick of a firefight. Pressing his back against a bulkhead, he snapped off a pair of quick shots in the same direction he saw other Starfleet personnel firing. Through the smoke and blinding ricochets, he couldn’t see if he hit anything.

Fyyl ducked as a volley of electric-blue bolts blazed past him in the other direction. Two of his fellow Starfleeters collapsed to the deck, their eyes open but lifeless, their limbs splayed in the awkward poses of the dead. His heart pounding, Fyyl returned fire into the smoky darkness, trusting his training over his instincts, which told him to run and hide. Several meters ahead of Fyyl, visible even through the dense gray haze, a red warning light flashed.

Someone behind him shouted, “Fall back!”

Terrified and tripping over his own feet, Fyyl struggled to turn away from danger.

The corridor lit up like a sun, swallowing Fyyl and everything around him in a flash of light and heat beyond measure.

• • •

“There’s been an explosion inside the station,” declared Lieutenant Vixia, the half-Deltan operations officer of the *U.S.S. Sparrow*. “They’re venting air into space.”

Commander Evan Granger leaned forward in his chair as he eyed the vapor jetting from a ragged wound in the hull of the command base. “Take us to Red Alert. If they don’t get that breach sealed in twenty seconds, get ready to close it with a force field from our shield generator.”

Beyond the decades-old space station, nearly two dozen half-constructed starships lay moored in their spacedock frames, mere shells of the vessels they were meant to become. Spread out beneath them was the shallow, dusky curve of the Martian surface, its crater-scarred face dotted with the gleaming lights of cities.

“Jex, any update from the station?” Granger asked his tactical officer.

The short young Bajoran man replied, “Not yet, sir.” He tapped at his console. “I’m still picking up heavy comm chatter from inside the station. Sounds like the intruder’s still alive and on the move.”

“Prep a tractor beam. Be ready to snag any ship or escape pod that leaves that station without clearance.”

“Aye, sir.” Jex began entering new commands on his console, then stopped, his eyes widening with alarm. “Another explosion inside the station.”

Granger looked at the *Sparrow*’s main viewscreen. Before the young commanding officer could ask Jex for more details, he saw all he needed to know: a massive conflagration had ruptured the station’s lower core, and a crimson fireball now surged toward the small patrol vessel.

“Evasive!” Granger cried out, gripping his chair’s armrests in anticipation. “All power to shields!” No sooner was the order spoken than the blast rocked the *Sparrow*. For several seconds stretched by fear and adrenaline, there was nothing for Granger to see on the main screen except static and a hellish cloud of flames, and nothing to hear but a deep roar of thunder against the hull.

The quaking ceased, and in the hush that followed Granger heard all the sounds of the bridge with perfect clarity: the soft chirps of feedback tones, the low thrumming of impulse engines beneath his boots, the gentle hum of ventilators.

“Damage report,” he said. “Jex, any casualties?”

“Negative, sir. All decks secure.”

Vixia said over her shoulder from the ops console, “Shields holding, sir.”

“Jex, hail the station, see if they need medical personnel or damage-control teams. And see if you can find out what the hell just happened over there.”

Sitting back, Granger wasn’t sure anyone would ever give him or his crew a true account of what had just occurred, but as he watched the station continue to burn, he wasn’t certain he really wanted to know.

“Do I even *want* to know what just happened at Utopia Planitia?”

Admiral Leonard James Akaar’s rhetorical question reverberated off the walls of his office on the uppermost level of Starfleet Command and gave way to a pained silence that none of his half dozen assembled peers seemed eager to disturb.

A tiny, throat-clearing cough snared Akaar’s attention. He turned his glare toward Admiral Alynna Nechayev, a trim, middle-aged human woman whose blond hair had begun to show the slightest traces of turning silver in the months following the previous year’s Borg invasion. “Preliminary reports,” she said with the practiced calm of a political veteran, “suggest that the fleet yards’ command station was sabotaged as a diversionary tactic, to conceal the theft of classified data from its main computer.”

Troubled looks passed among the other admirals in the room. Akaar got up from his desk and took his time

stepping out from behind it. He towered over the other Starfleet flag officers, and his broad chest and shoulders made it easy for him to part their ranks as he moved to stand in front of Nechayev. The svelte woman held her ground, tilting her head back to meet his gaze as he loomed over her and asked, “What was stolen?”

“The schematics for slipstream drive.”

Akaar’s jaw clenched. He sighed. “Everyone else, get out.”

Nechayev stood with her hands folded behind her back as the other admirals left the room. As the door slid closed behind the last person to exit, Akaar inquired, “How much do we know for certain right now?”

“Not as much as we’d like,” Nechayev said. “We’re fairly certain the spy was a civilian engineer named Kaz-ren. His dossier lists his species as ‘Dessev,’ but he appears to be the first of his kind we’ve ever met. He gained access to the main computer on Utopia Planitia’s command station at 1431 hours, using stolen credentials and specialized tools to fool the biometric sensors.” She stepped over to a control panel on the wall and called up a series of classified reports from Utopia Planitia. “The first explosion he set off helped him evade capture while he transmitted a locator signal. The second explosion appears to have been planned to disable the station’s shields and conceal his beam-out.”

Settling back into his chair, Akaar asked, “Beamed to where?”

Punching up a new screen of graphs and data, Nechayev said, “Sensor readings from the station and its patrol ship, the *Sparrow*, suggest there was a cloaked Romulan vessel waiting nearby to pick Kazren up.”

“How did a cloaked vessel get past our perimeter defenses?”

“We didn’t think the Romulans had this kind of cloak yet.” Nechayev pointed out an isolated section of the graph. “Judging from these readings, I’d say the Romulans have put phasing cloaks into active service.”

Akaar frowned. “If that’s true, they could be roaming at will throughout Federation space.”

“I know,” Nechayev said, “but right now we have a bigger problem. If the Typhon Pact develops their own version of the slipstream drive, we’ll lose the only tactical advantage we have left—and with it, our only hope of keeping this cold war from turning into a real one.”

All at once, Akaar understood why Edward Jellico, his immediate predecessor as Starfleet’s chief admiral, had always seemed to be on the verge of a migraine. Massaging an oppressive ache that throbbed in his temples, he said in a somber tone, “Can you give me the room, please, Alynna? ... I need to call the president.”

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