

STO ACADEMY

POWER PLAY



AN ORIGINAL STORY BASED ON STAR TREK ONLINE

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*For the prelude to this story, access the U.S.S. Fortitude's ship logs at
fortitude.stoacademy.com*

Part 1

"Any word, Sir?"

Commander V'Tash asked Hastler quietly as he sat in her office chair.

Hastler sighed deeply.

"Nothing yet. Dead to the world."

Attilio had confined himself to quarters without explanation.

James got up out of V'Tash's chair and leapt to his feet. Walking over to the console he folded his arms.

"Right then, what have we got?"

Lieutenant Anitra moved to the computer and tapped the screen in the top right hand corner.

"Sir, as we told you, we've been tracking this gas giant. As you can see here it has been moving from system to system, all within around 10 light years of our position, wherever that may be."

Anitra dragged the screen across to show a map of the sector and the gas' journey since it was tracked.

"Any idea where it's originated from?" Hastler asked?

"No, Sir. Not yet."

James raised his eyebrow.

"Computer," the ship chimed in acknowledgment.

"Based on the gas giant's current trajectory and how far it's travelled, can you predict its origin point?"

The computer chimed once more, and slowly drew on the screen a point-to-point map of where the gas giant had been.

"Computer, zoom in on the originating sector."

The 3 officers watched as the computer zoomed past star systems and planets to a small nebula in the Alpha Quadrant.

James went white.

“Sir,” Anitra said, worried, “what’s the matter?”

Hastler didn’t respond.

“Computer. Access historical logs, U.S.S. Potentia, Stardate 87378.08.”

“Authorisation required,” the computer replied.

“Authorisation Hastler-Alpha2,” the Admiral replied languidly.

“Access granted.”

“Computer, show location of Potentia on this stardate.”

Anitra and V’Tash watched as the Admiral’s face grew colder watching the screen, as the computer showed on the map where the Potentia was destroyed.

“Compare the predicted origin of the gas giant with the location of the Potentia’s destruction.”

The computer pulled up the previous map and amalgamated the two. James watched as the maps fit perfectly over each other, as the computer highlighted the location with a red, flashing circle.

“Commander, didn’t you say that this gas giant was acting like a humanoid brain?”

The Vulcan looked stunned momentarily.

“Uh...yes, sir. Why?”

Hastler turned to his Doctor.

“Who’s brain?”

“I’ve been running the scans through the computer - we have not had any results as of yet.”

“I’ve got a different idea.”

James motioned the officers into the adjacent laboratory where the scan was running.

“Computer,” Hastler beckoned. “Compare brainscan of the Alternate Attilio from the transporter logs of the Potentia before it’s destruction, with the Gas Giant Scan.”

Anitra slowly dropped her jaw as she watched James stare at the screen, his arms still folded. V’Tash matched his body language in equal concern.

It didn’t take long before the words “MATCH FOUND” blared and flashed like the lights in Club 47.

V’Tash tapped the screen to reveal exactly what Hastler did not want to see.

Laid out in front of them, the EM scan from the gas giant stretched along the top of the screen. In the middle, showed the log taken from the Potentia’s records.

The scan was clear.

The brainscan of Mirror Attilio, and the EM scan from the gas giant were a perfect match.

James tapped his combadge furiously.

“Hastler to Vinson.”

The Fortitude’s Borg Security officer responded as diligently as you would have expected from a borg.

“Vinson here, Admiral.”

“Seal off Deck 8. Bring a security team to meet me at the Fleet Admiral’s quarters, now!”

“Right away, Sir.”

The comm line closed.

Hastler turned to his Bajoran Lieutenant

“Lieutenant, get to stellar-cartography and track that thing. Since you found it, I want to know what its course has been up to now. V’Tash, you’re with me.”

The Admiral stormed out of sickbay before V’Tash had a chance to complain that James called her by her name and not her rank.

V’Tash followed the Admiral with haste out of the sickbay to the turbo-lift.

“Sir? What is going on?”

The pair walked into the turbo-lift before Hastler could adequately respond.

“Deck 8,” Hastler demanded. The lift swiftly responded.

“Before the *Potentia* was destroyed, the *Scientia* was called to its location upon the opening of a rift between our universe, and the mirror universe, where Attilio’s mirror counterpart was waiting.

Our *Potentia* and the *Mirror Potentia* were destroyed, and Attilio’s counterpart along with it...or so we thought.”

The Vulcan nodded at what her superior said.

“So, you are saying you think *Mirror Attilio* may be responsible for the gas giant, and *Attilio*’s behaviour?”

“Yes.”

The lift opened on Deck 8 to show Lieutenant Vinson and her team waiting for James and V’Tash.

Vinson noticed them immediately.

“Sir, the door is locked, there will be no way to use the command override.”

“I thought as much.” James pulled out a tricorder and scanned the door.

“He’s raised a level 5 forcefield behind the door. Lieutenant, do you have any remote charges?”

The borg raised her eyebrow at the notion.

“Yes, Sir.” She responded, as she handed him the charge from her belt.

“Everyone, get back.”

Vinson, V’Tash, and the team of officers stood at the far end of the corridor.

James ripped off the security panel beside the door, placing the charge on it.

Standing back himself, Hastler quietly tapped his combadge.

“Hastler to the Bridge.”

“May, here.”

The ship’s 2nd officer was currently on watch.

“Commander, I’m about to blow the shit out of the Fleet Admiral’s door. When the ship goes to red alert, cancel it - it’s only me.”

Commander May didn’t know how to respond.

“Uhhh...ok? I guess? Sir?”

“Hastler out.”

The Admiral abruptly closed the line and moved to the other end of the corridor.

“3...2...1...”

The door exploded out into the hallway. The lights immediately went dark and red alert blared into the deck.

The alert was promptly cancelled as Hastler rushed into the room. Vinson instructed the team to hang back while V’Tash stayed by the door.

As the smoke cleared, Hastler stood in shock as the Fleet Admiral’s quarters lay in complete disarray.

There was no way the explosion caused this mess, the force-field behind the door protected the room from that.

This mess...Attilio was responsible.

As Hastler looked around the room, he could see from the far end, Attilio, huddled in the corner.

Turning to the door, he instructed V'Tash silently to make her way in.

Moving softly towards Attilio, more and more of his commanding officer became visible.

The Fleet Admiral was shaking and perspiring uncontrollably, sitting in the corner of the room with his arms wrapped around his legs.

Hastler knelt down and shook Attilio by the shoulder. The Fleet Admiral still shaking.

"Sir? Sir!?"

"It's...him..." Attilio said irritably.

"Sir?" turning to V'Tash, confused.

Attilio reached out and grabbed James by the arm.

Looking Hastler dead in the eyes he said again, "IT'S...HIM!"

James stared back, not knowing what to say.

"IT'S....." the Fleet Admiral struggled to speak, and at that moment, passed out onto the floor.

V'Tash ran over with her tricorder and breathed a sigh of relief.

"He's still alive. Let's get him to sick bay."

Vinson's security team rushed in to secure the room, while 2 of them ran over to V'Tash to help her lift the unconscious Fleet Admiral.

James' combadge chirped.

"Anitra to Hastler."

"Hastler here."

“Sir, the gas giant...it's disappeared...”

Part 2

Commander May was called from the bridge to meet Hastler in Stellar-cartography. As he walked in, Lieutenant Anitra was bringing up the maps that the Admiral had requested.

The dark room was ominously lit by the large screen on the back wall, lighting up the officer's faces. On it, a point-to-point map across the quadrant, marking the gas giant's path.

James was the first to notice the Commander as he walked into the room.

“Ah, Commander. We've just been tracking Terran Attilio's gas giant.”

James had grown tired of calling him “Mirror Attilio.” It sounded far to endearing.

Anitra showed the map that she had brought up in V'Tash's office, showing the predicted origin point of the gas giant, and the direction it's travelled.

Walking along the back wall, the Bajoran pointed to the origin point.

“There is no doubt about it, this is where it came into our universe. We suspect the Terrans must be using some sort of interfacing technology that communicates with this ‘gas,’ and controls it.”

“Could it be some sort of probe?” May asked.

“We haven't detected anything like that. If it is, it would certainly be the first probe we've seen with this sort of capability. To link with another person and produce gas like that?”

Hastler interrupted, “Well, this cannot just be explained away, there has to be a reason. What is producing the phenomena and how is it communicating with Attilio?”

The group of officers looked at each other cluelessly. James leaned his hands on the console, staring at the map in front of him.

“A probe might make sense. “

The officers looked up at James as he spoke.

“We’ve theorised that the gas giant appeared right at the location that the Potentia was destroyed...”

Hastler typed a command into the console, with it the map moved through the stars to where his old ship was destroyed in its final battle. Coincidentally, their last meeting with the Terran Attilio.

“If our mirror friend is connecting to the probe, it could be acting as some sort of active relay.”

“Sort of like a listening post?” Anitra piped up with her finger in the air with slight excitement.

The Admiral looked up at the Science officer with a slight smile.

“Precisely.” Hastler replied. Anitra looked on smugly.

James sighed and stood back from the console.

“A probe then.”

They all nodded in agreement.

Commander May interjected.

“It’s the only thing we have right now that makes any amount of sense. If what Anitra says is right, that the probe is acting like a relay, then we need to establish how the connection is going from point to point.”

“But how have we not detected a probe?” The young Bajoran quizzed.

“Surely it’s not being cloaked?” What probe could both be cloaked and produce whatever ‘gas giant’ it has!?”

“It’s your job to find out. Keep at it, I’m going to see to Attilio.”

Walking out of Stellar-cartography, Hastler turned towards the turbolift, visibly stressed.

Hastler ordered the turbolift in typical fashion.

“Deck 5.”

As always, the lift whirred into seamless motion.

“What could he possibly want this time?” James thought to himself.

“Besides the demise of Attilio and utter domination...” he rolled his eyes and chuckled.

The lift doors opened suddenly. A quick walk down the hall and James had arrived at sickbay.

Attilio lay unconscious with a neuromonitor positioned on his forehead. V'Tash was stood scanning him slowly.

“Updates,” Hastler demanded abruptly.

“Nothing new, Admiral. His vital signs appear normal for now. Just slightly elevated levels of adrenaline and serotonin.”

James made a fist, bracing his chin upon it and resting the arm against the other.

Lifting his head to V'Tash, Hastler raised his eyebrow.

“Commander, what would it take to get inside his head and communicate with our familiar Terran?”

The Vulcan in front of him knew exactly what her commanding officer was on to. Her face visibly sulked.

“Sir, you know as well as I do that a Mind Meld in his condition could potentially be dangerous.”

“He isn't human...”

“Sir” V'Tash said, carefully. “He's only half Vulcan. You need to consider that this might actually do more harm than good.”

James sighed in deflation. His commanding officer was in danger. But more than that, so was his friend.

“Let me show you something.” V’Tash beckoned James over to her desk’s console.

“Computer, show record for Crewman Lon Suder.”

The fabled Betazoid from the starship Voyager’s first trip to the Delta Quadrant appeared on the screen.

“Do you know who this is, Admiral?”

James looked at the screen. The example was familiar, but not crystal clear.

“Remind me, Commander.”

“In 2373 when Voyager was taken to the Delta Quadrant, Crewman Suder was consumed by his violent tendencies, and murdered a member of the crew. It was only with a mind-meld from the then Lieutenant Commander Tuvok, that he was able to keep this under control.”

Hastler looked up.

“So, we can use the technique to help Attilio!” James clasped with excitement. V’Tash was quick to intervene.

“Not quite. Whereas Crewman Sudor was all but cured, his violent tendencies were in turn passed on to Commander Tuvok. The consequences were limitless.”

James nodded his head.

“So your saying that, even if we used the mind meld to help him, he could end up being just like his alternate.”

“That is correct, sir” V’Tash replied.

“Can we wake him?”

V’Tash nodded. Hastler followed the Doctor back into main sickbay and watched as she prepared a hypospray.

“If at any time he starts exhibiting his prior behaviours, for the safety of this ship I will sedate him again” V’Tash warned Hastler.

The Admiral nodded in acknowledgement. "Proceed."

James watched as V'Tash gently pressed the hypospray against Attilio's neck, and the Fleet Admiral slowly started regaining consciousness.

Attilio calmly blinked as his surroundings came into view. He took a deep breath.

"Doctor...Admiral..."

"Try not to move, sir" V'Tash said calmly. "You have been through a lot."

"Sir, what's the last thing you remember?" Hastler asked.

Attilio sat up slowly on the bed, grimacing slightly.

"I..." the Vulcan let out a defeated sigh. "I remember the Terran Attilio inside my head, tracking me, and my thoughts. It was...an invasion. I don't know how he's doing it."

V'Tash and James looked at each other, concerned.

"Sir," James continued. "We know you've been breaking down. Whilst this has been happening to you, we have found a gas giant has been following our location, reading on an EM band, like a brain."

Attilio blinked in surprise. It was a reaction seldom seen of the Admiral once seen as reclusive.

"It's him. It's the only explanation. But how?"

"We think it may be some sort of probe. However once you became unconscious after we broke into your quarters, the connection must have severed as the gas giant disappeared."

"Any trace?"

"Nothing."

Attilio looked around. He knew there was a risk that with him being awake, the Terran Attilio could find him.

He turned to his First Officer,

“We all know while I’m conscious he can come back. We have to find him, but on our terms.”

Hastler and V’Tash looked at each other.

“Sir, what do you have in mind?”

“Commander, put me into an induced coma. If me being unconscious stops his progress, then we need to do that first.”

V’Tash stepped forward in protest but Attilio immediately put his hand up and stopped her.

“Commander, I know what I’m doing. Trust me.”

V’Tash raised her eyebrow. The Fleet Admiral’s decision went against all logic. However, she also knew he was half human, and to humans, sometimes logic has nothing to do with it.

The Doctor knew Hastler trusted his commanding officer. She would just have to do the same.

“Hastler, effective immediately I am giving you command of the Fortitude, and the fleet. Do anything, and I mean anything, to find Attilio, and stop him.”

The doctor solemnly placed the hypospray against Attilio’s neck, and as the Fleet Admiral slowly lost consciousness, he gave his first officer a familiar nod.

He was the Fleet Admiral now.

James tapped his combadge,

“Hastler to May.”

“May here, sir.”

“Get me Voyager.”

To be continued...