

When the Levee Breaks
by
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"*Exeter*, come in *Exeter*, over." There was no response on the comms. Lt. Stanley Meerchamp wrinkled his brow. "That's not usual."

"I concur, Lieutenant Meerchamp. Should we make any alterations to our plans?"

"Naw, I'm sure it's just a flutter or something. And Ensign, how many times do I have to tell you to call me Brick? S'what everyone else calls me."

"With respect, Lieutenant, it would be a breach of protocol for me to address you in such a casual manner."

"Yeah, but Deval, we're gonna be on this shuttle for at least another two days, even at warp 3. I'd prefer it if you just call... Y'know, never mind. Proceed with the mission protocols, as planned."

"Aye, sir."

Brick settled back into the chair, sighing inaudibly. It wasn't that he minded missions like this. It was nice to have a break from the routine of the ship, get to see something new, even if it was just a Starbase. It was just... traveling at warp in a shuttle might be one of the most boring things in the galaxy.

The *Exeter* had been the closest ship to Starbase 27 when the request for the ambassadorial transfer had come through. They couldn't deviate from their mission trajectory, but they could send a pair of officers in a shuttle to go pick up the ambassador in person.

"Deval, you ever listen to Zeppelin?"

"I- I am not sure I understand your query, Lieutenant."

"How familiar are you with music from Earth, before the Eugenics Wars?"

"I have to admit, Lieutenant, that my knowledge of Earth music is... limited." Brick's eyes lit up when he heard that.

"Ensign Deval, you're in for a treat." Brick reached out and pushed a few of the buttons on the console next to him. "I always load up my personal music library when I go on missions like this." With a flourish, Brick pushed the button to begin the music playing.

Nothing.

"What the..."

Before Ensign Deval has a chance to react to the rhetorical question, a series of alarms and sensors started to blare. Brick moved over to the seat next to Ensign Deval, fingers working the controls.

"Lieutenant, it appears that our warp bubble is beginning to decay."

"Heard, Ensign. Route the auxiliary power into the warp drive, see if you can stabilize it."

"Routing auxiliary power." The computer bleeps a negative tone. "Lieutenant, it appears the auxiliary power will not engage. The warp bubble continues to decay. At its current rate, I estimate we have approximately fifteen minutes before it collapses completely."

"Get me a readout of the internal systems."

"Aye, sir." A tense moment passes. "Sir, it appears the aside from the auxiliary power, all of our systems are reporting as functioning within operational parameters."

"Are the sensors still active?"

"Aye, sir."

"Run a sweep of the environment around us, see if you can spot anything in subspace that might be messing with the bubble. I'm gonna head to the back and see if I can't get the auxiliary power engaged."

"Aye, sir, scanning."

Brick moved past the consoles, punched another set of buttons, and music flooded the shuttlecraft.

"Sir?"

"Deval, if this bubble collapses, I'm not gonna have you leaving this reality not knowing Zeppelin. Now keep scanning."

When Brick got back to the auxiliary power relays, the panels were flashing, showing the system was working with everything it had.

"Deval, whatever's going on out there is playing merry hell with these systems. What are you seeing?"

"It appears there is a subspace... storm of sorts, Sir. The power fluctuations are cascading across the warp bubble and a range of shifting frequencies. It appears to be too much for the system to handle."

"Yeah. Yeah, I see that, too." Brick's mind raced. They needed something to accommodate the power fluctuations.

"Devel, I might have an idea. When I give the word, you try to engage the auxiliary power again."

"Sir?"

"Starfleet sent out test kits for the new isolinear tech that's gonna be rolling out across the fleet within the next few years. I brought mine with me." Brick moved as he talked, heading for the small Jeffries tube that gave access to the warp core. "If I can rig that test kit into the system, it might give us the processing oomph we need.

"And if it does not, Sir?"

"Well, then I guess we'll be heading out to Chicago."

"Sir?"

"Just tell the computer to repeat the song and listen to the lyrics, Devel. You can do two things at once."

Brick squeezed into the tube, reaching up to grab the isolinear kit where he'd stored it before they left the *Exeter*. Ten feet down and quick pop of his fist and the access panel opened. Brick's hands flew, removing couplings, stripping wires.

"Five minutes, Lieutenant."

"Aye, Devel. I'm about to hook it up."

A quick prayer under his breath and Brick hooked up the isolinear kit.

"Now, Ensign."

"Aye."

A series of sparks radiated through the Jeffries tube and Brick pushed a stray contact into place. The isolinear kit hummed to life.

"Auxiliary power engaged, Sir. Warp bubble stabilized."

"Good work, Ensign. Bring us out of warp. This kit won't hold for long."

"Aye, sir. Dropping out of warp."

Brick made his way back to the command seats, flopping down into the space next to Devel.

"Open comms to the Starbase, let them know our position and situation. Same for the *Exeter*. I figure the Starbase can get someone here faster.

"Aye sir."

While the Ensign communicated the situation, Brick sat, breathed, and looked out at the stars through the viewport. Something new to see each time.

"Lieutenant... ah, Brick, the Starbase is sending a rescue craft. They should arrive in one-point-five days."

"Good." Brick smiled. "Brick, now? What happened to protocols?"

"If you had not applied that test kit, we would be dead now, sir. Such a use is well beyond established protocol. It made me reconsider."

"Fine by me." For a time, the two sat, old Earth music surrounding them. "What do you think of the music?"

"It is... agreeable to me."

"Glad to hear it." Brick relaxed into the seat. "We've got some time to kill before the rescue comes, and there's plenty more to listen to."