

Star Trek: Sutherland Leading with your Heart

By David Falkayn

"Entering Molochi system, sir." Lieutenant Lavelle reported as the bright yellow G class star grew larger in the viewscreen.

"This should prove quite interesting, Captain." Lt. Commander Varok, the *Sutherland's* science officer stated, "It is rare that we are able to witness the transitioning of a star from main sequence to red giant."

Chuckling softly at how well the Vulcan hid his enthusiasm for witnessing such an extraordinary event under his usual emotionless façade, Captain Shelby declared, "All right everyone...let's get to work." Turning towards her science officer, she smiled, "It's your show, Mr. Varok."

"Scanning and recording data, sir," The science officer began only to be interrupted by the ship's operations officer, Lieutenant Anara Rysyl.

"Captain..." The Deltan interjected her lips turned down into a frown. "I'm picking up transmissions from the fourth planet. Very faint...amplitude and frequency modulated radio waves mostly with some visual transmissions."

"Radio and television?" Liz asked, her earlier ebullience quickly disappearing as the implications of her operations officer's findings struck home.

"Yes sir." She stated sadly adding, "I can patch the video transmissions to the main viewscreen if you'd like."

"Do so." The captain ordered. As the static and wavy lines on the viewscreen slowly took shape, Liz's heart sank. What the captain assumed was a family appeared on screen, apparently being interviewed. "Do we have audio?" She asked, addressing Anara.

Her fingers quickly manipulating her console display, Anara answered in the affirmative as sound accompanied the images on the screen.

"We're not sorry for ourselves..." The female said, holding her male bond-mate's hand.

"My love is right..." The male concurred, "We have had our time together. We've lived and loved together."

"It's our young ones..." The female said, brushing away a tear with a six fingered hand. "We're sorry that they will not experience the joy that we have had in our lives. That is what breaks all of our hearts."

Turning towards the camera, the interviewer, a graceful appearing humanoid female with flaxen hair, alabaster skin, almond eyes, full lips, and a slender nasal ridge lamented, "And that is what breaks both of my hearts too—that all we've built...all we've accomplished...in over ten thousand revolutions will soon come to an end as our own sun betrays us. For generations we have had to live underground as our sun grew ever brighter and hotter, but we knew that one day we could hide no longer. That day is now upon us. Soon...we will be no more. There will be no more skoler ballets...no more readings of the poetry of Kryzlyk...no more chime songs. Our world will be swallowed up by our sun...its crust and mantle melted away." Her eyes appearing to bore into Liz's, the commentator concluded, "If there are others out in the universe...please know that we were once here and that we loved life and loved beauty...that we laughed and danced...and yes, that we cried as our lives ended all too early. Good bye my loves."

Brushing away a tear of her own, Liz once again addressed Anara in a subdued, almost hushed tone. "Anara...Please make recordings of all transmissions from the fourth planet." Turning towards Varok, she instructed, "Mr. Varok, I want as detailed planetary scans as possible without either putting the ship in danger or risking detection by the inhabitants of that planet."

As both officers acknowledged their orders, Ensign Django muttered in a somber tone, "It's times like this that make me think that the Prime Directive is a piece of mugato crap."

"Would you care to repeat your statement, Ensign?" Commander Hobson abruptly inquired in his usual patrician voice, his gray eyes focused on the chocolate skinned young woman.

Shaking her head sadly, Maria replied, choking back a sob, "I said that I couldn't believe that we're just going to let these people die because of the

Prime Directive.”

“And how would you resolve this situation, Ensign?” Varok queried in his usual level tone. “Initial scans indicate a population in excess of a billion inhabitants in underground dwellings. The *Sutherland* can evacuate a total of 9,800. What would be your criteria for determining which of the one billion on that planet we take and which we leave?”

“I don’t know!” The ensign replied, barely repressing a sob, “But to just sit and watch while these people die...it just seems so...”

“Ghoulish?” Lieutenant Sam Lavelle filled in from his position at the helm.

“Yeah.” Maria responded, nodding her head.

“I think I have to go with Maria here...” Sam said. “I understand why we can’t interfere...how necessary the Prime Directive is and all...but I still feel like I’m the witness at an execution.”

“When you look at it from that rather visceral and emotional perspective, Ensign and Lieutenant...” The experienced Vulcan science officer stated, correctly inferring from his captain’s subtle nod of the head that she wished the discussion to continue, “...then yes, one could come to that conclusion. But...” he advised, “...it would be one illogically arrived at.” Pausing for a moment, he explained, “By studying these beings and recording their transmissions we are not being as you put it...ghoulish. Rather, we are preserving a portion...a small portion to be sure...of who and what they are. We show them honor and respect.”

“I understand what you’re saying, sir...” Maria replied, shaking her head sadly, “But that’s not going to matter to those poor beings. They’re still going to be dead soon.”

“Sir?” Anara interjected, “I’ve picked up something on their broadcast channels you might be interested in.

“And so the decision was made to send out a...memento...of who we were in the hopes that if there are others out amongst the stars that they might find it and...remember us. Dr. Myzlpyk? Could you please tell us what is on this...space probe?”

Another humanoid, only this one with tufts of grey hair, appeared next to the flaxen haired interviewer. "I would be glad to Cyzyny. It contains a selection of our music and literature along with a means of deciphering our language. It also contains messages from individuals from all walks of life—everyone from the Council of Elders to merchants and scholars and laborers and office workers. Elderly...male...female...young ones...voices of us all...were recorded. With any luck, there are those out there who will find this and learn something about us and our hearts and souls."

Turning towards the camera, the commentator said, "And so...hopefully something of us will continue to live on even after we are all gone."

"Sir..." Lieutenant Manuele Atoa stated from his position at Tactical, "...an object has been launched from what appears to be an underground silo." A few moments later, he reported, "Chemically powered rocket propulsion...it's reached escape velocity..."

"Will it be able to escape the potential expansion radius of the star?" Liz asked.

"No sir..." Manuele answered back as he shook his head, a note of regret to his voice. "I'm sorry."

"Damn." Shelby cursed in a low tone. Her forehead creased, she leaned forward in her seat as she drummed the arm of her chair. "It might work..." She whispered. Her eyes gleaming, she addressed her chief helmsman, "Mr. Lavelle? Are you really as good a pilot as you say you are?"

"Yes sir!" The Canadian answered back confidently.

"You might get the chance to back that up." Liz riposted and then she addressed her science officer, "Mr. Varok? How far would that probe need to travel before we could snatch it without being detected?"

"Unknown, captain." The science officer replied, "While we can safely avoid their radar, I cannot guarantee that our craft wouldn't appear to the radio or optical telescopes which are sure to be trained on the probe."

"We'll have to chance it." Liz decided. "Mr. Lavelle...take us to that probe...maximum impulse."

"Aye sir!" The helmsman answered back as his hands flew over the controls. The impulse engines firing up into life, the Nebula class starship slipped smoothly into motion, launching itself towards the probe, its crew determined to rescue that small remnant of a soon to be dead people.

"Closing to transporter range..." Lieutenant Atoa reported, "We're within range."

"Now!" Shelby ordered the transporter chief, "Get me that probe."

Several seconds later, the chief's voice came through on the intercom, "We got it, Captain." He reported as both Lavelle and Django let out audible cheers while most of the rest of the bridge crew either smiled or sighed in relief.

Addressing her helmsman, the captain quickly ordered, "Get us back out to a safe distance, Mr. Lavelle."

"Captain..." Varok, a slightly somber note to his voice, spoke up as he looked up from his console, "...the star has reached its threshold point. It is about to expand to a red giant."

"Those poor people..." Anara said softly, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Activating the ship's intercom, Shelby broadcasted, "I am requesting that all hands not involved in absolutely necessary ship functions please come to attention and observe a few moments of quiet reflection in honor of the inhabitants of Molochi IV." Standing up, Liz watched as the bright yellow star expanded, turning a dull red as it did so. Her eyes tearing, the captain noticed similar reactions amongst most of her bridge crew. Commander Hobson, the Iceman, appeared grave as he lowered his head while Ensign Django was openly sobbing. After a few minutes of silence, misty eyed, Liz turned the intercom on once again. Her voice resounding throughout the ship, she said in a somber tone, "Attention all hands. You may now return to duty."

Making her way to her ready room, the captain addressed her science officer, "Mr. Varok...how long will it take for your people to complete their work?"

"I would estimate no more than four standard hours, sir." The Vulcan responded, his voice more solemn than usual.

"Thank you. Once your people have finished, you may begin your analysis of

their craft.” Turning towards her first officer, Liz ordered, “Mr. Hobson...once Mr. Varok’s people are done, get us out of here...”

Entering her office, Liz sat down in her chair. Tears rolling down her cheeks, she gave in to her emotions, allowing her heart free rein to grieve for those gentle beings whose lives, through no fault of their own, had just been snuffed out. Those people led with their hearts and, while they might have died, the captain mused, by doing so they saved something of themselves. “Not the worst way to go,” she reflected somberly as she picked up a padd containing the latest orders from Starfleet, “Life goes on—it has to, otherwise their lives wouldn’t have any meaning.”

The End