

Tales of the Fleet

Damage and Consequences

By Dnoth

"By stealing their warp coil, we could be condemning them to death!"

"We're going to leave them a supply of trillium and some extra food. I'm not saying it'll be easy for them, but they'll have a decent chance of getting home."

~T'Pol and Archer, ENT: "Damage"

Illyrian Science Vessel *The River of Stars* **Day 0 (12 Jan 2154)**

"The Earth ship is firing!" reported Defense Specialist Kolum of Tanara.

The ship's manager, Mochana of J'bel, rushed into the command center just in time to hear the unfortunate news, "Evasive maneuvers!"

An explosion in the back of the control center gave an indication of their adversary's might. An engineer manning a nearby station fell to the floor, screaming in agony. He had been severely burnt by the blast.

Mochana ran to a medical storage locker and knelt down to the injured woman. He was about to begin treatment when he heard, "Manager, they've disabled our warp engine! ...maintenance crews are reporting intruders!"

'So much for peaceful exploration,' Mochana morbidly thought. He gestured for a crew member to tend to the engineer. He knew exactly what the Earthers were after. Then, he strode to another locker; this time, a weapon's locker. He tossed an electroshock gun to everyone. "They're using their matter/energy transporter to steal our warp coil. Set up a forcefield around it!" He looked to Kolum, "Stay here and return fire. I'll lead the team to capture the Earthlings."

One of *The River of Star's* defense personal, Nam, reported as he found his manager in the corridor, "Two engineers have been shot. Three more defense officers are down."

"Are they dead?" questioned Mochana.

The officer shook his head, "It doesn't appear so, Manager. They are using a type of non-lethal weapon."

The manager dryly quipped, "So they're not murders, just thieves."

Nam added, "We have them pinned down in the auxiliary maintenance room."

"Tell your teams to advance," began the ship's commander, "I want to try to flank them and create a..."

A strong jolt rocked the ship. Mochana and Nam had to steady themselves against the bulkhead. For a moment, total darkness took them. A moment later, blue emergency lighting initiated.

Nam stated the obvious, "We've lost main power."

Mochana fumed, "We don't even have the repairs from the anomalies complete! Damn the Earthlings!" As an afterthought, he realized, "...and the forcefield around the warp coil is down." He turned to Nam, "Join the main force. I'll try to sneak up behind them."

"Alright," the defense officer agreed and strode down the corridor.

Mochana was nearly at his target. Suddenly, Archer and two soldiers rounded the corner. They immediately leveled weapons at him. The manager was armed, but realized they had taken him by surprise. Out of disgust, he spat, "What you can't have, you take by force?"

The Earth commander weakly replied, "We beamed three containers of trillium into your cargo hold...as compensation. There's also food and supplies." It was the terms of their original failed trade offer.

Anger, disappointment, and disbelief filled Mochana's voice, "You're stranding us three years from home! Why are you doing this?"

Archer offered, "Because I have no choice." He raised his communicator,

“Energize.”

The Earthlings disappeared in a soft light. They were gone. Mochana looked at his electroshock gun. Rage boiled within him. It crept up steadily until he made a primal scream and threw his weapon.

Day 4

The blue emergency lights in his cabin taunted him. Thanks to the *Enterprise*, primary power was still off-line. They were defenseless. The ships weapons were undamaged, but with the fusion power plant disabled, they were useless. The *River of Stars* was still in the red giant star system, the Earthlings called it Azati Prime.

Captain Archer also warned Mochana about a hostile race in the system, the Xindi. The manager reasoned, if the Earthlings treated the Xindi like they treated his people, the Xindi might have good reason to be hostile against Humans. Hopefully, the same would not be true of the Illyrians.

Their top speed was now 0.2 the speed of light. The nearest Illyrian colony, Kesa, was only 0.675 light years away. ‘*Only...*,’ the manager darkly mused, ‘*it might as well be across the galaxy without warp drive.*’

He now realized how naïve his people were. The Illyrians invented warp drive 17 years ago. They had colonized three habitable planets outside their home system since then. In their haste, a critical technology had not yet been developed, subspace radio. Without it, Kesa would get his distress call in about seven deciyears. Ironically, rescue would come six days after that. Mochana was very weary now. He knew contacting the Xindi was an option. But if they decided to be aggressive...he and his crew would be at their mercy. ‘*Let’s at least wait until we have weapons back on-line,*’ he thought.

Day 6

Manager Mochana, being a former engineer, often dwelled in the heart of the ship. It had been especially true ever since they entered this star system.

He looked at Head Engineer, Ishmara of Rulla, she was one of the most gentle

people he had ever encountered. She smiled as he entered. It was a reassuring, hopeful smile.

“Mochana, how are you feeling?” she greeted.

He forced a smile as well, “That will depend greatly on your progress.”

She sighed, “I can get the cold fusion reactor on-line in a few decadays...”

Mochana’s face exploded with a genuine grin, “That’s great!”

Ishmara, however, was more reserved as she continued, “When the Earth ship destroyed the power junction, much of our deuterium oxide supply escaped into space.”

The manager’s expression immediately revealed his understanding, “So our heavy water, our fuel source, is mostly gone.”

She offered, “We have 28% left.”

“How long will that last us?” questioned the demoralized manager.

Ishmara considered. After a moment she estimated, “Assuming we don’t have to divert power to weapons or shields too often...about half a year.”

The Illyrian captain found a nearby stool and sat. He shook his head, “Not nearly enough time.” After a time of grief, he asked, “Is the laser communicator still working?”

“Yes.”

He stood, attempting to regain his composure, “It’s about time I make a call.”

Xindi-Reptilian Warship *AP-2*

Weapon’s controller Gonin spun his seat, “Commander Bik, I’ve detected an alien vessel.”

Bik stood from his throne, “Another intruder in our system.”

"It appears so...and Commander, it is near where we left the Earth ship."

The reptilian commander grimaced as *Enterprise* was referenced. His ship was one of four that attacked the Earth ship only six days ago. Their enemy destroyed an Insectoid vessel in the battle. And on the cusp of victory, they were ordered to stand down by the Primates, Aquatics, and Arboreals. All the Reptilian commanders in the system were severely berated by Commander Dolim, the Reptilian representative on the...now waning...Xindi Council, for not detecting and destroying the intruder fast enough. "Perhaps the humans had help in infiltrating our security grid," he conjectured. The commander ordered, "What is their tactical status?"

Another Xindi reported, "Low energy levels. It appears they...wait! I'm reading a large relative energy spike!"

Gonin assumed, "They're powering defenses!"

The commander stepped forward, "Raise shields; disable them!"

A beam of energy slammed into the dorsal side of the manta-ray shaped Illyrian science vessel. A hull breach was immediately created on the ship. Due to the explosion and venting atmosphere, it began to spin helplessly in the void.

Normal lighting appeared only for a moment when the ship once again shook with a frightful force. Again, the Illyrians were plunged into darkness.

Mochana fumbled to a companel, "Report!"

Defense Specialist Kolum's voice was heard, "*Manager, We're under attack by another alien ship!*"

"Is it Xindi?"

"I don't know. Sensors are off-line!"

The manager punched the wall several times in frustration. Why had the One abandoned him and his crew! He wanted to break down, but he wouldn't let

himself. There was only one choice to save as many lives as possible. He activated the com again, "Kolum, signal our surrender."

Xindi-Reptilian Warship AP-2

Day 12

Mochana fell to the grated, metal deck. His face was covered blood. His clothes were tattered. He had soiled himself several times over the last few days. His captives refused to clean him. As he lay, he convulsed slightly.

Commander Bik made a lap around the broken, defeated creature. A few of the other aliens allowed themselves to die during their interrogation. Bik felt a strange sense of pride for the Illyrian commander. Mochana had endured the pain well.

The reptilian squatted down, "Good news Mochana! My superiors and I have decided to believe your story! You *were* a victim of the humans!"

The Illyrian manager made some type of vocalization...more of a grunt than anything.

"And I have more good news!" Bik continued, "We've decided to tow your ship to just outside the system...and in the direction of your colony!" He stood and looked at a subordinate, "Clean him up. Return the Illyrians to their ship, whether they are dead or alive."

"Yes sir."

The River of Stars

Day 15

Mochana's eyes opened. He found himself on the floor of *The River of Stars*'s cargo bay, along with what looked like the rest of his crew. He thought of moving, but unconsciousness overwhelmed him again.

Day 16

"Sir...Manager...sir?"

The manager woke again. This time, he discovered Kolum kneeling over him. "Kolum," Mochana absently said.

The Defense Specialist was relieved to see his boss alive, "Yes sir."

Slowly, Mochana became aware of his surroundings again. He propped himself up on his elbows. He grimly inquired, "How many?"

Kolum helped up the manager as he responded, "Four, I know are dead." He slightly changed the subject, "A few people have been up for a couple of decadays. Most everyone else are beginning to stir now."

The manager fought back the still lingering pain of his torture. He assessed the situation as best he could. *'At least the doctor is alive,'* he noticed. There was one person he didn't see, "Where's Ishmara?"

Kolum examined the deck for a moment before responding, "We already moved her to the morgue."

Mochana's eyes began to water. He did his best to suck up the tears; not because he was ashamed of them, but because there was work to do. He began to limp to the exit, "Let's get to the control center."

Day 27

Kolum had become the de facto manager, since Mochana had taken over engineering duties. The blue emergency lights had become a symbol...a symbol of their misery. Suddenly and without warning, they were replaced by normal lighting. It took a moment for Kolum's eyes to adjust. He moved to touch the companal on the manager's chair, "Kolum to Mochana...did you just do that?"

The voice over the intercom was one of jubilation, "*Yes I did!*"

Day 29

All 41 remaining crew members were gathered in the cafeteria. On each long table was a feast. For the first time in a month, there was reason to celebrate...the lights were on and had stayed on.

For a few meager decadays, the crew forgot their worries and enjoyed themselves. Ironically, they feasted on the food stuffs provided by the *Enterprise*.

Day 44

Mochana closed an access panel. He had finally finished a repair caused by one of the spatial anomalies they encountered as they entered the system. ...Damage that precipitated his decision to contact the Earth ship.

In the back of his mind, he understood how irrelevant the repairs were. In the fifteen days the engines had been back on-line, they traveled all of 0.008 of a light year. Add to that, the fact that the ship's power source would run out of fuel in another 140 days or so. Not to mention, the trillium-D still hadn't been applied to the hull. The possibility existed...they could run into yet another spatial anomaly.

He leaned back for a moment, *'At least the Xindi ignore us now.'* Despite what they had done, he would contact the Xindi in a second if he thought there was any chance of them helping his crew. *'If only they would send a message...a simple subspace message...'* His thought was squashed, however. Even if the Xindi sent a subspace message, the Illyrians lacked the technology to receive it.

Day 103

Kolum was a masochist. He looked down at the flight control display, as he did everyday. It indicated they had traveled 0.064 light years from Azati Prime.

Manager Mochana entered the control room. He had a look of defeat on his face. He whispered into Kolum's ear, as not to fuel already widespread rumors, "Even with minimal life support and all non-vital systems

deactivated, the deuterium oxide will be gone in two and one half deciyears...at best."

The defense spec. soaked in the information. "So what do we do?"

Mochana took a deep breath in contemplation, "We have three options: wait for assistance..."

"You mean hope for assistance," Kolum interrupted.

The manager nodded and continued, "...contact the Xindi, or die."

The fatalist options struck Kolum like a hammer, "The last two choices might prove to be the same thing."

"Maybe," Mochama admitted, "but I still believe there is some good in this galaxy. They *might* help us."

"How can you say that about the people who killed six and tortured all of us!"

The manager had a lot of time to think about how to respond to that. He said, "You forget the lessons of the One. We shall not lose compassion for others, like the Earthlings and the Xindi have. Fear compels them." He concluded, "I refuse to let fear dictate to me."

Kolum shook his head, "I wish I had your faith, friend."

His decision made, Mochama ordered, "Send a distress call back toward Azati Prime."

His subordinate slowly nodded, "Yes sir."

Day 104

An alert came from the defense station. The crew had become rather casual about manning their posts, Kolum included. Luckily, a lower officer was in the control center. She walked to the station...it was a proximity alarm! She tapped the com, "Mochana, Kolum, get up here, quick!"

A few moments later, the duo entered. The officer reported, "There is a

massive vessel out there and got us in a tractor beam!"

Mochana questioned, "Is it Xindi?"

Kolum took his station, "I'm not sure, it's very different than the ones we've seen before." He added, "It's pulling us into a hanger bay."

The manager asked, "Can we disable the beam?"

The defense specialist offered, "Maybe," he made eye contact for affect, "but sir, we could never get away from this thing."

Mochana accepted their fate, whatever it may be.

"Manager's log: We've been in the clutches of this vessel for nearly a deciday now. I have no idea where they are taking us. Our captors refuse to communicate with us, which makes believe they are either slavers, or perhaps the Xindi are going to punish for communicating with them. Either way, I'd like to make it known how proud I am of the crew's action over the last...nearly three deciyears. Despite our situation, they have performed admirably. If any Illyrian ever hears this, know that we did our best...and we never wavered from our principals."

Kolum burst into his office, "You're not going to believe this!"

Both ran on to the command deck. The main viewer was a sight to behold. The large, bay door had just finished retracting...and beyond was a habitable planet. The ship began to be ejected by the larger vessel.

The defense officer double checked his readings. "Sir...it's Kesa. It's home!"

Again, Mochana's eyes watered. His heart felt alive. An immense feeling of gratitude flowed through him. He ordered, "Reverse view, I want to see who helped us."

The screen switched to a large, smoothly designed vessel. It had, what looked like, forward swept 'wings.' It almost looked like it belonged in the water. Their silent savior glided around and set a return course.

Mochana looked at the majestic ship. He uttered, "Thank you."

Two Xindi-Aquatics floated in an amber liquid. They communicated in their high-pitched song.

“Had the Reptilians informed us about this vessel to begin with, things would have been much better for them,” one said.

The other added, “The Reptilians are not the only ones that share the burden of responsibility for them. The Illyrians will not soon forget what the humans did.”

THE END