

A TEAR IN THE NIGHT

Characters and Text © 2002, Slate Cooper

Ship: U.S.S. *BAYONET*

Type: Sovereign Class N.C.C - 66895

Star Date: 95884.3

Location: Cardassian-Federation Border

Commander: Captain Peter Smith

The *Bayonet* hung in space, its grey paint job brightened by the light of the Kranis System's sun, somewhere on the Cardassian border. Only its blinking lights, glowing warp nacelles, deflector dish and occasional room light glowing within its hull like a star caught in an iron fist gave any indication that there was life on the ship as it sat there quietly. Despite the calmness, Captain Smith had a hard time going to sleep.

Smith sat up from his bed. His lean wolf features were of a medium build, his green eyes like emeralds and his flowing black fur with white tufts on each paw, and he had grey stripes on his chest and muzzle. He looked at a holo-picture of his wife and two year old daughter. He caressed the picture knowing it wasn't like the real thing, but it was the closest he had since Katrina and Melissa couldn't come on the *Bayonet* with him. *Three months* he thought. *Three months since I saw your shining face, Melissa.* He missed his daughter's face as he looked at the picture of her with a smile like the morning sun. Knowing his daughter's birthday was coming up the next day, Smith had plans to head back to Earth tomorrow to be there for her. He grinned, thinking how she would like to see her dad on her birthday. And Kat would love to see him too; she was the light of his life, and missed her greatly.

Placing the Holo-picture back on its mantle he grinned as he looked at it again. "Soon honey, then Daddy's going to be home," he said to the picture, as if it was a communicator and his daughter was listening. He then turned away from the mantle and walked into the changing room. Opening the top holder to reveal a sink, he turned it on and splashed some water onto his face. Reaching over to the towel rack, he grabbed one and began to dry his face.

Suddenly the ship rocked and Smith fell back, his towel flying from his hands as his back hit the cold metal wall behind him. The ship rocked again, nearly throwing him from the room but he managed to retain his balance. "BATTLESTATIONS!" came Smith's First Officer's voice over the intercom. Smith rushed into action, throwing on his uniform before running out his quarters' door. Noticing the blaring red emergency lights and the now darkened hallway with people running by, Smith ran toward the Turbolift. As he stepped into the Turbolift the ship suddenly jerked to the side again as Smith felt the impulse engines kicking in; the ship was going into evasive manoeuvres. "Bridge!" he called out after the doors closed and he righted himself from the last hit. The Turbolift then began its quick trip to the bridge.

In seconds the lift opened and Smith walked out onto the oval-shaped bridge as the ship rocked from another attack. His First Officer, an echidna, sat at the helm next to a female mouse. As Smith walked to his chair he noticed the helmsmen on shift lying on the ground with half his face burnt beyond recognition from where his console had exploded in his face. Looking at the view screen as he sat down in his command chair, he noticed a large yellowish ship that appeared to dwarf the *Bayonet* fly by, leaving the screen on the upper right side. "REPORT!!" he cried out. A calico cat at Tactical fired the main phasers before answering. "Cardassian *Hutet*, sir. It came out of warp with weapons blazing. It hit our warp engines before we could raise the shields."

The mouse at Ops looked back at Smith from her position. "Sir, she's coming around for another pass." Smith knew the *Hutet* out-gunned the *Bayonet* if they stayed in front of it, but if they could get

behind it where the *Hutet* had less weapons they had a better chance of surviving this onslaught. “Chris, set course 357.92. Keep us behind the *Hutet* as best you can.”

“Yes, sir,” Smith’s First Officer replied and punched in the course.

“Mr Simmons, transfer power to forward shields and weapons systems —” The ship rocked from another blow cutting Smith off. After that, he added, “Target their aft weapons and FIRE!” he shouted at the calico, who did his job accordingly and did just that.

In space the two starships performed a ballet of death, like dancers on a stage; each ship moved across the night sky exchanging blows that could destroy whole cities, their shimmering hulls changing colours when streams of coloured death flew across the vastness of space, hitting or missing their target as the ballet continued vigorously. The *Bayonet* had managed to stay behind the *Hutet*, firing her phasers and quantum torpedoes, which appeared to do little to the *Hutet*’s reinforced shields and hull.

Then horror struck. With an output from the *Hutet*’s thrusters on maximum power, the large yellow behemoth performed a one-eighty and faced the *Bayonet* straight on. Like Hell itself it fired all its weapons at once. The *Bayonet* didn’t have a chance as the phasers ripped into the forward shields, followed by the torpedoes, which finished the job, smashing into the hull like bats out of hell. The torpedoes ripped the bridge and many other decks to pieces, leaving the *Bayonet* adrift in space as the huge *Hutet* flew past getting ready for another run.

On the bridge it was a complete and utter mess. Live cables hung from the ceiling where it had exploded, the back wall of consoles was completely destroyed as the room itself was filled with a grey hanging smoke, taking four good officers with it. At Tactical Simmons’ body lay hunched over his station, his face burned and large pieces of debris sticking out of his back after both consoles he watched had exploded and impaled him from both sides. Chris lay on the ground his arms out stretched, his whole front side burned to a crisp. The mouse was still in her chair, her head resting back due to a large chunk of debris sticking out of her neck, the blood running down her shirt onto the seat as her console burned in front of her. At Science was an orange fox, his face disfigured from the blast, and on the middle of the floor lay Smith, the back of his head bleeding from where something had hit him in the back of the head, luckily not killing him. He groaned as he pushed up from the floor and started to stand up. “Report!” he commanded, but no-one answered; the whole bridge crew except him was dead. Looking at the view screen he noticed the display was snowy, and starting to turn back.

Stumbling forward he sat back down at Helm. Doing a quick check he saw that the impulse engines still worked. Clicking a button he set a call out across the ship: “All hands, abandon ship, repeat abandon ship.” Smith looked back at the Turbolift doors and saw they were blocked off by a pile of rubble. He turned back to the console and watched its display, which showed that the escape pods had already begun their escape from the ship. In moments all the crew that was still alive were in the pods floating in space.

Smith looked up at the screen and noticed the *Hutet* was taking its time; it wanted to destroy the pods. His eyes filled with rage as he thought of this, his crew helpless and defenceless as the *Hutet* closed in on them to seal their fate. “Oh no you don’t!” Smith shouted to himself, suddenly filled with the energy from the urge to save his crew. He punched in some commands and the *Bayonet* abruptly raced forward toward the *Hutet*. It was clear the *Hutet* noticed the sudden movement of the *Bayonet*, for kept turning to face the *Bayonet* down instead of going after the pods. “Warning: impact in forty seconds,” the computer warned Smith, but he increased the power to the impulse engines, transferring as much energy as he could into them from Weapons, Shields, Navigation, and Life Support. It was too late to turn back now, but if the *Bayonet* was going down, Smith was going to make sure that damn ship went with it.

Smith sat there as the computer counted down until impact. He had set a collision course with the *Hutet*’s warp core. The *Bayonet* dove at the *Hutet* like a bat out of Hell, its damaged hull looking like a jagged piece of metal that had been dropped from a skyscraper. The *Hutet*’s aft weapons fired in vain at the *Bayonet*, ripping larger and more jagged holes in the ship but it was obvious that neither of the

ships would survive this. The impact would set off both ships' warp cores and that would be the end of it.

Smith watched the *Hutet* growing larger and larger on the screen; he wasn't afraid, he wasn't disappointed in his choice. He just sat there thinking of Melissa and Katrina. His wife's pretty white fur, and loving face, how she was always there for him even when his friends died. Smith remembered his first date with Kat, then their marriage and Melissa's birth. Then his daughter; how she had grabbed his nose when he had first held her, her transmissions to him on his deep-space mission, Melissa and Katrina waving to him, and her first words.

"Ten seconds to impact," the computer's lifeless voice said over the speakers. "Nine, eight, seven, six, five, four...." Smith closed his eyes as the ships drew closer. "Three, two...." He shed a tear, his first – and last – in years. For his family, for his crew and his friends. The tear seemed to take forever as it rolled down his cheek, slowly and steadily until it hit the bottom of his face, and fell slowly – so slowly – glimmering in the light of the flashing lights on the helm console. It splattered onto the console and splashed upwards but it never finished. "One."

The explosion was a terrible sight to behold; the *Bayonet* hit dead on and like a giant javelin pierced the iron hide of the beast that was the *Hutet*. Deck plates on the *Hutet* bent and broke as it was forced inwards. The paint on the *Bayonet* was scraped off as the jagged pieces of the *Hutet* ripped at it after the decks gave out. The *Bayonet* suddenly stopped after smashing as far as it could into the side of the *Hutet*, her left warp nacelle cracking off and flying into the side of the *Hutet*, crashing into the *Hutet*'s upper section, crushing the bridge and then vaporising it as the nacelle exploded. The lower section of the *Bayonet* suddenly expanded as the core overloaded; the ship bulged briefly for a split-second – an eternity to outside observers – before the ship was ripped apart by the explosion that ran through all the decks and into the side of the *Hutet*, whose core went critical seconds later. The *Hutet* bulged, expanded immensely, then finally exploded, vaporising what was left of the two ships. The process took only ten seconds from the initial impact to the point of their destruction, but to the men and women of the *Bayonet* who had survived it was forever, as if the whole thing was just a bad dream and they would soon awaken. They knew it wasn't a dream, however, and knew a great man had just died for them.

* * * * *

The Next Day

Melissa sat on the ground of the house, wearing her grey coat with shades of black and white on it, her Starfleet costume that her mom made for her underneath (giving her the rank of Admiral), and a grin that looked like it would brighten the world. She had ten of her friends over and they were having a merry old time as each of them gave them a present to Melissa. She loved all of it and hugged each of her friends for the gifts.

Her mom came in with the birthday cake, which was a triple layered Devil's Food cake with chocolate icing and three candles in it. Melissa's eyes lit up at the sight of her favourite cake. "Make a wish, and blow out the candles, honey," Katrina urged Melissa. The youngster made her wish as she blew out the candles, and as she did so the door chimed and Katrina stood up.

"Come in," Katrina said, watching the door open and her Dad walk in his Admiral's uniform. "Dad!" Katrina greeted him, walking over and hugging him.

"GRANDPA!" Melissa came running full speed at the man and he crouched and hugged her as she wrapped her little arms around his neck. "Hey there, Mel," he said as he rubbed her head, messing up her fur. "Got anything for me, Grandpa?" Melissa asked as she let go and jumped up and down.

"Oh, of course. Why wouldn't I bring a present to my favourite granddaughter?" He reached behind him and pulled out a large box and gave it to Melissa, who took it happily and ran back to her

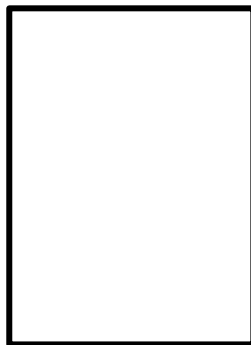
friends. When he stood up his expression was stern as he turned to Kat, who noticed the look on his face. "Dad? What is it?" Kat asked, suddenly scared and her eyes growing in size. "Where's Peter?" she almost cried out as she grabbed her father.

Her dad hung his head as he reached back and pulled out a small Padd, and a box and handed them to Kat. She took it and looked it over, then tears rose in her eyes as one hand covered her mouth. She dropped the Padd and the box, before breaking out into a fit of crying, leaning against a wall and sliding to the floor.

The Admiral looked at his daughter, then knelt down and hugged her. "I...I...I'm sorry, honey...." Katrina dug her face into her father's shoulder and cried, making the kids walk over. Melissa was in the front, holding her grandfather's gift, wondering what was up with her mother. "Mommy? Where's Daddy?" Melissa asked.

On the Padd was shown:

Peter J, Smith



KIA

Rank: Captain

Ship of Command: U.S.S. Bayonet

Dear Mrs. Smith

I am sad to report that Captain Peter J Smith, your husband, has died in the line of duty. The Bayonet was attacked and in a last-ditch effort your husband rammed the enemy vessel and destroyed it to save his crew from being killed. For this your husband has received the Federation Medal of Honour. May I express my deepest sympathies to you and your family.

*Signed,
Admiral Summers, FHQ*