

Chapter 2

Location: Hyperspace

0742 UST, Day 322, NE 5

As the ship entered hyperspace, there was the wrenching sensation that living beings felt as the ship crossed over. This wrenching effect was the cause of what many called hyperspace sickness in living beings. Most people felt a little queasy and disoriented for a short period of time and then recovered. Some simply got sick to their stomachs and emptied the contents of the same. Only rarely did hyperspace sickness have a more severe effect than that, but there have been documented cases of individuals dying from the transition.

Scientists had developed a medicine that diminished the effect. Most spacers got so used to it, so that, after a time, it became just a minor annoyance.

Captain Nile shook his head to clear the disorientation. It never worked he would just have to wait for it to go away on its own. Nevertheless, he always did that.

Lieutenant Inshali was blinking and holding her eyes, which seemed to the captain as her ritual for dealing with the disorientation.

He called over the crew intercom, "All stations report conditions on the jump."

The stations started reporting, and Lieutenant Inshali acknowledged each station as they reported. Then she said, "Captain, all stations report normal on the jump. Two of the passengers lost their lunch, but Doc and Daniels are making sure they are okay."

"Very well," the captain replied and then called over the crew intercom, "Secure the maneuvering watch. Station the normal underway watch, section one provide."

Once in hyperspace, the Blue Goose ran a 6 hour watch rotation with three sections. Each section had a bridge watch, whose task it was to monitor for fault conditions and attempt to get them corrected before they became a significant problem. There was also a roving watch that moved through out the ship checking conditions at local stations and providing a ready body to be the first responder in emergencies.

The three officers shared the duty of the bridge watch. Doc and the two gunners shared the duty of the roving watch. If there were no passengers on board, the loadmaster would help with the roving watch. The Blue Goose was fortunate in that Doc was a Chief Petty Officer and had qualified to stand the bridge watch. She would share the bridge watch duty with the officers if the loadmaster was standing roving watch. Technically, the medic is not required to stand a watch, but Doc liked to pitch in and help.

In these chapters, show some underway routine. Have Doc fleece the baby marines at poker. Do some sort of weird things in space. Consider an encounter with a free trader

and/or another Coalition ship. That would also allow us to demonstrate the sensors. Save the Vampire encounter for later.

Petty Officer Jenkins wandered into the bridge, data pad in hand. Lieutenant Buchannon was on watch, but was very bored. Things were running quite normally and they were in hyperspace. She was glad Jenkins had come back; at least there would be someone to talk to.

“How are things out there, Jenkins?” Kalin asked reasonable sure of the answer.

“Well, except for the poker game going on in the common room, nothing much is happening,” He replied.

“Marines,” Kalin asked.

“Yeah, but Doc is playing as well,” Jenkins said with a grin, “Looks like she’s winning.”

“They never learn,” Kalin said, laughing.

“I guess no one ever warns them back at base not to play the Doc on the Blue Goose in poker,” Jenkins said, laughing with her. “It’s about as bad as drawing on an inside strait.”

Kalin said, “I’ve made that mistake a time or two in my life. What about you?”

“Well,” Jenkins said with a grin, “There was this one time it actually worked for me.”

“Care to share?” Kalin asked.

“Well, it was back in replacement depot. I had been sitting in hot standby for about three weeks so far and was still waiting orders. Our duties were pretty light, you know the usual stuff, paint this, salute that, that sort of thing. Anyway, we usually didn’t have much to do at night and plenty of money to do it with, so we played poker...often.”

“That the one at Dawn Base?” Kalin asked.

“Yeah,” Jenkins said, “That’s where most of the marines heading out to the Area of Operations wait.”

“That’s what I thought,” Kalin said.

“There was this one hand where it was down to me and the gunny. Everyone else had folded early. Gunny had a pair of queens showing. I had a pair of kings and a 10 up and a jack and an ace in the hole.”

“Gunny must have had another queen or something better in the hole,” Kalin said.

“As a matter of fact he did and must have thought I was bluffing, being a dumb spacer type. And I was, kind of, when you get down to it. I mean, what I had up was good enough to beat him, but the way he was betting should have told me he had more. It sure got the other grunts to fold pretty quickly.”

“Well, he was older and more experienced,” Kalin said, “He might have figured the pair showing and aggressive betting would cause most of them to fold.”

“Maybe I was too young and dumb at the time,” Jenkins said, “But the pot was too big to walk away from by time the sixth card had been dealt. I got a lousy 4 of diamonds and he got an ace of something. He kept a strait face though and tossed another hundred into the pot.”

“That was a pretty rich game,” Kalin said.

“It was, but we didn’t go out into town that much and had a bunk and chow,” Jenkins said, “Besides, the money usually changed hands to someone else the next night, except Gunny seemed to keep a lot of it.”

“Funny how that works,” Kalin said.

“Anyway, I called and the dealer tossed the last card, face down,” Jenkins said, “I turned it over and nearly lost my cool. I had gotten a queen of diamonds.”

“So you knew he couldn’t have four of a kind,” Kalin said.

“Exactly, but he kept betting hard,” Jenkins said. “I felt pretty good then and raised on him. He called and flipped over that other lady and some other random cards. He was betting that I only had the pair. You should have seen the look on his face when I flipped my strait on him.”

“You were playing seven card stud it sounds like,” Kalin said. “Not quite the same as draw poker.”

“Well, no,” Jenkins said, “But it was a hand to remember.”

“Well, keep an eye on the boards for me, Jenkins,” Kalin said, getting up, “I’m going to make a head call.”

The Blue Goose exited hyperspace and entered normal space in the ZZZZ system. Riga kept a close watch on the sensor screens looking for any type of trouble.

Terrell commanded the view ports to go transparent again. He knew that the sensors would pick up anything long before he could see it, but he preferred to have them clear.

He looked out the view port and said, "Something's not right. I would have expected the planet to be larger than that."

"Let me check our position," Riga said and started to take a bearing on known stars.

Terrell gave her attitude control so she could position the ship to get her sightings.

Riga took sightings on three of the stars that the Coalition regularly used for astrogation and uses the astrogation program to run calculations. Finally she said, "We are about a light second further out than we should be."

"That's unusual," Terrell said and then called back to engineering on the intercom, "Engineering, bridge, run a diagnostic on the drives. We arrived in system a little bit off."

Riga asked, "Should I plan for a longer burn than usual, Terrell?"

"Let's see if we are by ourselves first," Terrell replied, "Don't want to go expending our fuel if we have to maneuver."

"I'm searching now," Riga said.

Kalin called forward, "Bridge, Engineering. Diagnostic completed, they jump drives check out perfectly. If there is a problem with them, the tests can't detect it, but they are pretty thorough."

"Thanks, Kalin," Terrell said. Turning to Riga he asked, "Could we have run across a hyperspatial anomaly?"

"It is possible," Riga replied, "but this is a fairly frequently used route. If there is, it is either new or transitory."

"In any case," Terrell said, "We will need to report it when we get a chance."

Over the next several weeks, the Blue Goose followed a trail of worlds, mostly dead, until they were in hyperspace again having left Exeter and on their way to Promise.

There was the wrenching sensation again. The Blue Goose exited hyperspace and was one again in normal space. Within seconds, the passive sensor array started receiving

signals that corresponded to the radio traffic that was being passed back and forth between the ships in the system.

The Blue Goose had arrived at Promise and the Reformation Coalition Exploratory Service was there in force.