

The Incident at Station 23

A Qattusverse Novel

Written by Chris Moody

Dedication to Chapter 2

Dedication:

I'd like to dedicate this book to many people, who in some small or large way helped me through out the years. To my high school senior English teacher Mark McKinnon who encouraged me out of my shell.

To Leslie Ann Moore, who was my first cheerleader for this book.

To Diane (Keikomushi on Twitter) for being my second cheerleader and for being my keeper of the lore.

To the Mighty Mur Lafferty, who showed through her work “Heaven” that books don't have to be fully written before they can be podcasted.

To Tee Morris and Scott Sigler, for blazing the trail for podcast novelists, who would come after them.

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Chapter 1

The following Docu-drama, is combination of both official and unofficial interviews, and station security. While the producers have tried to stick as close to the facts as they are known, this may not be the only interpretation of the data presented.

Young Troop 75 was on their way to Station 23, to start their R&R after placing at the platinum medal level in the Tri-Arm Federation War Games. For many of Troop 75, this was the first time they had ever been on a ship so luxurious. While it wasn't the most fancy ship in the vacation fleet, it was none the less, much better than the military transports they normally were on.

The normally always visible adult coordinators, had recently been reassigned, so the young troop was to meet with their new adult coordinators on the transport that was to remove them from Station 23, in two days time.

“Approaching Base 23 in 15 minutes, please find your seats and secure harnesses,” the shuttle captain's voice broadcast over the loud speakers.

Adam and Deanna returned to their seats.

Deanna pulled out the digital pad she'd been reading, since they found out they were going to dock here.

“What is it your reading anyways,” Adam asked staring at the pad.

“The novel *My Life Among the Olediem*, written the daughter of a diplomat to the Olediem,” she replied.

“A Diplomat? Probably full of lies, they make all of the wars we have to fight,” Adam replied shaking his head.

Deanna turned and soon started giggling in hushed voices with her friends who sat next to her. Adam put his headphones on, and decided to attempt to relax. Coming out of subspace always goofed him up a little. Unlikely as it was, being pushed back into normal space could literally rip you apart.

“Sir,” asked a hesitant voice. Adam tried to ignore it, but had to look to see who tugged on his shirt. He opened his eyes and saw one of the youngest people ever in the student corps.

“Yes, Andrew, what is it” he asked trying to remain calm and not let his own anxiety get the better of him.

“Is it true sir?” he asked shoving his blonde hair away from his bright blue eyes which were as big as saucers looking up at him expectantly.

“That depends, what are you speaking of?”

“When we go from subspace to normal, that we could be shredded?”

Adam sighed. *What to tell him, he can't be more than seven.* The truth while usually the preferred answer, was rather startling...

“Yes, Andrew its possible, but it hasn't happened in a very long time. The last time it occurred was back during the Oscarian War.”

Andrew blanched and his pupils dilated. “I remember seeing the holo-clips from that war, it was very bloody.”

“You've seen those clips already? I didn't see those clips till I was nine. How old are you?”

Andrew fidgeted with his hands. “I'm six sir.”

“Returning to normal space in two minutes,” the captain announced.

“You should return to your seat Andrew, it can be a quite bumpy ride if aren't harnessed in when we return to normal space.”

Andrew snapped a salute and disappeared around the row of seats. Adam put his headphones back on. He hoped the music would calm his frazzled nerves after his discussion with Andrew. He couldn't believe that a six year old had made it onto his team.

Even though the music blared in his ears he could hear the reentry process start. In the distance a small creak echoed louder and louder as it progressed through both time and space. He squeezed his eyes closed. A light shined through as if he looked straight into a star. He knew this was the event

horizon, where molecules played bumper cars with everything with in the parsec.

“One – One Thousand, Two -- One Thousand, ...” he started to count, trying to calm down. *With everything working as it should be by the time I reach 10 seconds, we will be in normal space and the last 2 minutes of flight will be all totally normal,* he thought.

At the count of *seven – one thousand*, he heard it. He couldn't put his finger on it at first. At *nine – one thousand*, he heard it again.

The cabin erupted into screams as it began to spin wildly out of control.

He stopped counting; his breath left him before he could capture it. Part of his brain wanted his eyelids to open. He opened and closed his eyes.

The light is still here!

Chapter 2

Music from the Otrax flowed through the room. Colors floated across the walls.

“How long do you think we'll be in here,” Kami whispered.

“I hope not too long ... I had a massage to go to today,” Shen responded.

Kami gazed at him with big brown eyes. “I'm sure you could find many who would be willing to assist you in that.”

Shen felt his cheeks burn; he couldn't help but to look away.

“Deshi,” he excitedly called out.

“Ah, Shen! I was looking for you,” Deshi said as he waddled over to Shen and Kami.

Kami rolled her eyes and sighed, then walked away.

“She still hasn't gotten over it, huh?”

“No, and she won't as long as I can help it,” Deshi said with a huge grin on his face.

Shen, shook his head.

“So, when are we leaving this room? I'm getting kind of hungry.”

Shen tapped his friend's stomach, and watched the jiggle. “It does appear you are. Why don't you go see if you can get a grup on the line? And ask them.”

Deshi sauntered away, whistling.

“Kaji Shen,” Shen heard a young voice say behind him.

Shen turned around, and saw a young cub, not even a stum old. He put his left hand on the cub's brown fur.

“Yes, young one,” he said as he squatted next to the child.

“My friends and I are starting a game of capture the knights. Would you like to join?”

“Capture the knights? I used to be pretty good at that game.”

The cub looked at him, a smile playing across his golden face.

Shortly after he had started playing with the young cub, Deshi ran to Shen, panting. After Deshi had caught his breath, he whispered in Shen's ear.

Shen's face paled, and his eyes widened. "Excuse me younglings," he whispered as he tottered toward to the com station.

Soon most of the older kids followed him, wanting to know what shook him so badly. When he reached the com station, Shen saw that the panel displayed the recognized life patterns on the station. The only blips on the screen indicated the cub's location.

"What does it mean," someone asked in the crowd.

"They are all dead," someone else whispered.

"Shhhh," Shen responded, "we don't know that. They may have told the computer not to allow us to scan outside of this room. For now we just wait till we have further news."

The crowd dispersed. The music and chatter grew louder.

"You don't really think that do you," Kami whispered.

"I don't know what to think.... For now though, lets just go have fun."

The blips were forgotten. Half a clip later, from the distance they heard the din of metal scraping metal. The music died and lights dimmed.

Everything stopped. One of the youngest cubs let out a surprised yelp at the sudden quiet. Shen rushed to the com station, followed by the other older cubs.

"What's that red light mean," whispered Deshi.

"I think it means we are on auxiliary power," Shen said, looking at the panel.

The lights slowly waxed, the music returned on its own.

"Look! Orange dots," Deshi said, bouncing.

"What are they doing here," asked Chul-Moo.

"My father said something about them sending a group for a break," Min-Jee replied.

At least it should mean an adult will be with them, Shen thought. A forced smile crept on his

face. He looked at Deshi and Kami standing on either side of him.

“Let's celebrate!”

The music played and the children filled the room with laughter.

Thirty ticks later, the door opened. All heads turned. Quickly, a group of Oligarcy children came in. Two of them carried another.

“Where is the grup,” Shen asked quietly.

“What is a grup,” asked one of the Oligarcy children.

“You know, an adult, the person in charge of you,” Kami said.

“The only adult, with us was the pilot of the craft. I think he died when we crashed,” said a girl with blonde bangs.

“We need to get our Young Commander to a medical bay. He isn't doing too well.”

“I'll show you how to get there,” Deshi said. With that, Deshi and four Oligarcy children left the safety room.