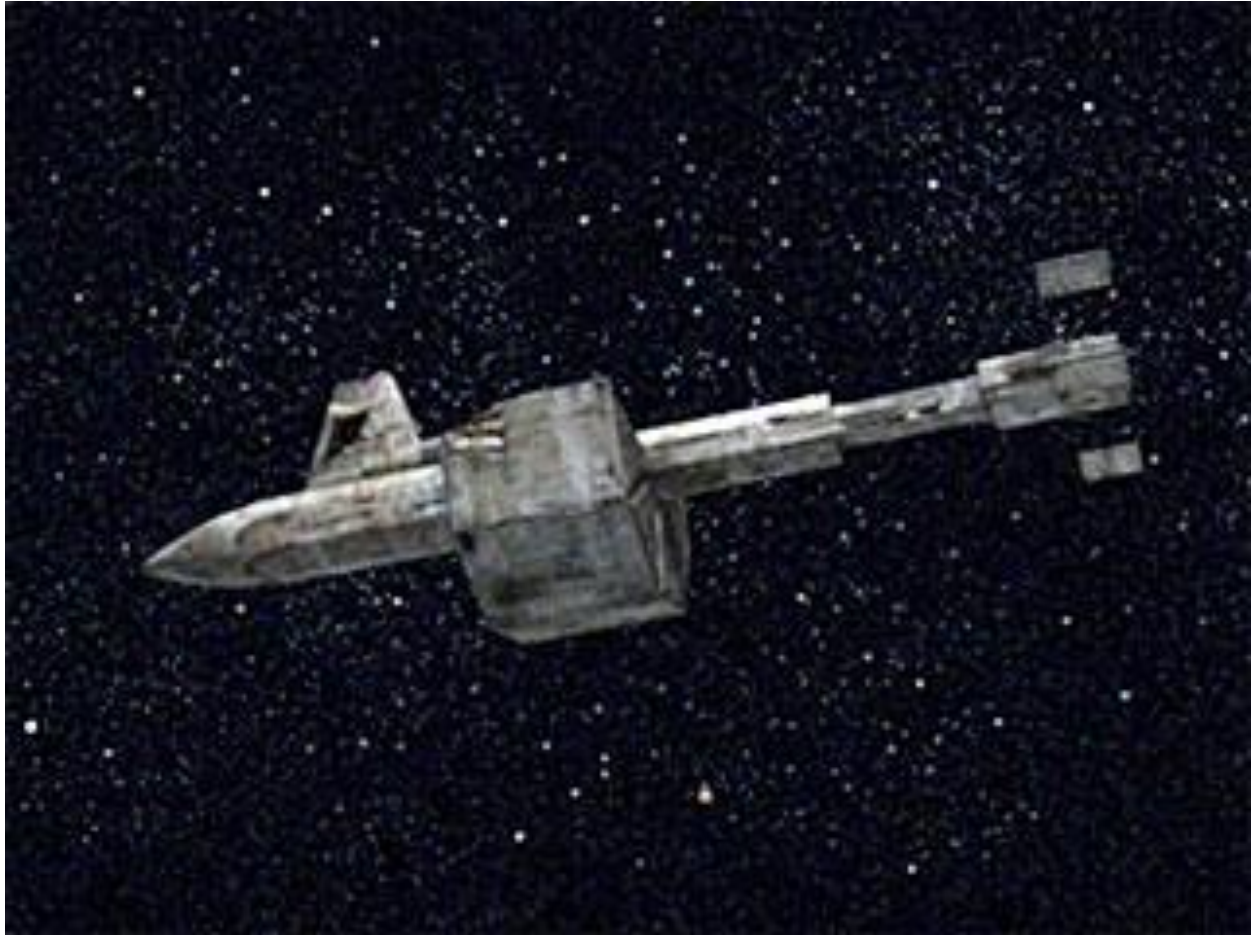


“TO REAP THAT WHICH IS SOWN”

BY KENNETH THOMSON JR.

FOR RICARDO MONTALBAN...



The *S.S. BOTANY BAY* drifted in space....

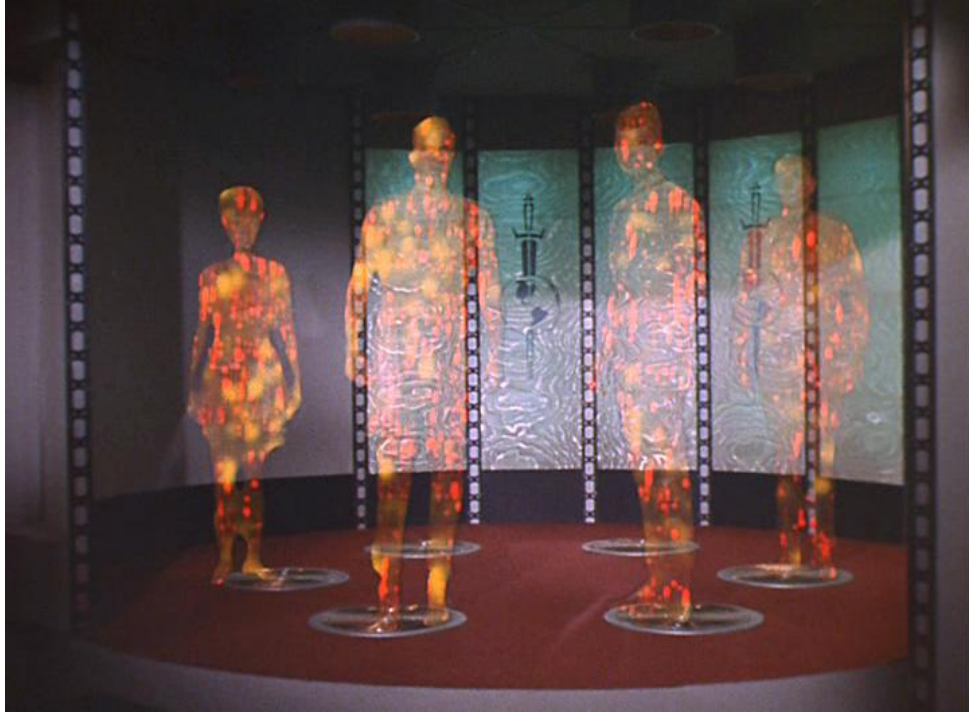
"Captain's log, Stardate 3141.9. We have found, drifting in space, a ship out of antiquity. Computer records date it from the year 1996, part of Earth's, specifically the Imperial States of America's, secret space programs. The ship is old, but may hold information of interest to the Empire. We are beaming down to investigate."

The *I.S.S. SALADIN* pulled up alongside the derelict, taking the vessel in tow.



* * *





Inside the 20th Century vessel, six forms solidified as their atoms re-formed into humanoid figures--Captain John Russell, Commander Ray Martin, Engineer Singh, Dr. Dvin Thelev, Ship's Historian Marla McGivers and MACO Commandant Robert Shea.

"Well? I want information, people," Russell frowned.

"You heard the man, people, snap to it," Martin echoed then went to the computers himself to get information. Russell followed him, looking around the primitive, submarine-shaped craft.

"I didn't think they had artificial gravity in the twentieth century," he said with skepticism.

"They didn't," McGivers told him, "But then again, this class of ship wasn't launched officially until the mid twenty-first century. This ship must have been a prototype."

"I want its origin found," Russell said to Martin, "Or you'll be enjoying a tour of the booth."

Martin glared at him and told him, "If the data is in here, you'll have it, SIR."

Russell laughed and looked around further, leaving his XO to do his job. He didn't turn his back on him, though, because rumor had it that Chaney had made that mistake some months ago at just an inopportune moment....



"Captain!" McGivers shouted.

They all turned to the tenseness of her call, but Martin stayed at his job while the others went to see what she had found and was shouting about.

A hatch with a glass window was mounted in the wall, and inside, a man lay in apparent sleep. No, it was not sleep, for he was not breathing.

"Looks like some kind of suspended animation, Captain," Dr. Thelev told Russell.

"Open it," the Captain said.

"He might die, Captain," the historian said.

"Your point is?" he retorted.

"You won't learn much from a dead man," she retorted back.

"Looks like a lot more of them around here," he said, waving his arms to the rest of the sleeper chambers around them, "Plenty more to try if he dies. Now do it!"

Singh started to tinker with the controls, and the man on the slab began to convulse and shake as the chamber started to short circuit. The chamber opened, sliding outward. But the man was dead....

"Next," Russell sneered.



They moved on to another chamber, this one contained a man who was easily twice the other's size and stature, with long black hair, looking very much like an American Indian or a Barbarian out of the tales of Conan....

This time, the sleeper awakened. He whispered in a gravelly voice, "H--how ... long?"

"I'll ask the questions," Russell sneered.

The man looked at him, taking note of the eye patch and the scar that ran through what must have been a blow that had removed the eye, and said, "Then ask."

Russell smiled, clearly pleased that this man knew his place. "Your name and your mission?" he demanded.

"Khan."

"Mission?" Russell asked again.



"I grow weary of your questioning," he replied stoically, already regaining his strength, and looking at the chamber next to his own, on it laying the charred remains of Joaquin, his oldest friend....

"Kill him," Russell ordered Shea, who leveled his phaser.





But before he could, Martin fired his. Shea disintegrated before them, then, a second blast, and Russell's screams faded in a whine of the phaser as he too, disintegrated.

Thelev and McGivers looked at Martin with horror and fear that they too, were about to die. But Singh and Martin only smiled. "The captain's days are over. Do you wish to join him as well?" Martin asked them.

"No sir," each replied.

Khan sat up, regarding the smaller man thoughtfully, and said, "I find I am in your debt, sir."

"You are Khan Noonian Singh, are you not?" Martin smiled.

"I am," the other said with a polite nod of appreciation for one who seemed to be holding all the cards at the moment....

Marla looked at Khan, and knew who he was as well. But she was surprised that the ship's XO... now captain... would also know his identity....

"I have a proposition for you," Martin smiled.



Khan squinted at him, but nodded, "I would hear it...."

To Be Continued....

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