

Friday  
September 1st, 2028  
07:56 hours (PST)

"I'm telling you, it was thing. They were real," Ella insisted as she and Serenity sat across from one another in the briefing room, waiting for the others to arrive.

Serenity, who was staring down at a tablet in her hand, simply shook her head with disapproval. "You're being silly, there is no way the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are real. That's a myth," she insisted, never once moving her eyes away.

"Check the logs or something. Do we have logs for that? The turtles were a real thing in New York. They even went on a mission with the power rangers once," she brought up.

"There is absolutely no way that mutant turtles were living under the city of New York in a sewer, fighting crimes and lurking in the shadows. It just doesn't make sense. It's one of those stories that get passed down from generation to generation, and along the way people add their own spin to it. If there had been creatures living beneath the city, why didn't the government move in to investigate? Where were the Silver Guardians?" she asked.

"The Silver Guardians were only in Silver Hills. Hence the name *silver*. California is almost 4000 kilometers from New York. They wouldn't have known."

"Well what about Lightspeed Rescue? Or even better, when the first aliens settled on Earth in early 2018, why didn't they come out of the shadows and live like everyone else?" Serenity inquired.

Ella paused. She was clearly stumped by the question, but determined not to give up. "Look, I don't have all the answers, but I know I'm right about this. They were a thing."

"There were *not* a thing."

"They. Were. A. Thing," Ella said insistently.

The doors to the briefing room slid open as Commander Schuyler Tate entered the room along with Ensign Pascal, Ensign KJ Ford and Lieutenant James.

"Good morning everyone," the commander said, taking his place at the head of the table. He took a quick sip of his coffee, then set the mug down on the table. Pascal and Asia found their way to the opposite side of the table, sitting down.

“Commander, can you settle something for us?” Serenity asked, finally putting her tablet down and turning to him.

“I’ll be my best. What is it?”

“Will you please tell *Ensign* Enrile that there is no such thing as the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles? They were, at the very most, a cartoon or a comic book,” she said.

“I...”

“And you will please tell *Lt. Commander* Serenity that they were real, and even went on a mission with the power rangers,” Ella brought up.

“This is what the two of you have been talking about all morning?” KJ asked them with irritation in his voice.

“She won’t shut up about it. There is no such thing as mutant turtles,” Serenity insisted.

“I won’t shut up about it because I’m right!”

“That’s enough,” Commander Tate sighed. “There were no mutant ninja turtles,” he told him.

“I told you!” Serenity exclaimed.

“But there were a race of turtle like creatures that lived in the sewers of New York in the early 20th century. They were Kinosternites, a sort of turtle species,” he added.

“I told you!” Ella yelled, standing up. “Wait... what?”

“Aliens had been coming to Earth for years before the Interplanetary treaties were signed. The Kinosternites were one of them. At the time the world wasn’t ready for first contact, so they hid in the sewers, living off whatever they could find. And yes, they did assist the Astro rangers against Astronema in the late late 20th century, but there were not mutants, not teenagers and definitely not turtles. At least not by human standards,” he explained.

“Is it really so hard to believe that there were turtle creatures? I mean, we have a frog and a kitty on our team,” Ella pointed out.

The plain look on Ensign Ford’s face seemed to change from plain, to somehow more plain.

“For the last time, I am not a kitty,” he scoffed.

“Enough of this, it's time to get down to business,” at that moment, everyone set aside their disputes and turned their attention to the commander. “All of you have been progressing well in your training, and I'm going to send you out on field duty. Lt. Commander, select a member of your team to accompany you into the city. There have been reports of some sort of electron buildup coming from the warehouse district. I want you to investigate and report back. This is a reconnaissance mission. If you do encounter something, do not engage,” he told them.

Serenity turned to Ella. “You're with me, Ensign,” she said.

“Aye, sir.”

“As you know, Garr was injured last week and lost a lot of blood. While he is doing well, we do not have Anurian blood on hand, so immediate family is begrudgingly in route from their homeworld to assist. His parents will arrive at 0830 hours in shuttle bay four. Ensign Ford, your job will be to meet them there and escort them to the infirmary so we can begin the transfusion,” he said.

“Sir, would I not be better suited for...” he was quickly interrupted.

“You are best suited for the assignment I give you, ensign. You would be wise to remember that,” he scolded in a firm, but subtle tone.

“Aye, sir,” he groaned.

“Lt. James, you and Ensign Carson will...” he paused. “Where is Ensign Carson?” he asked.

Everyone immediately turned to Ella, expecting an answer. “What? Am I my brother's keeper?” she responded.

“Yes,” they all said in unison. It was enough to make even Commander Tate crack a slight smile.

Ella scoffed, folding her arms. “Fines, he's been in the infirmary with Garr, keeping him company. He's been cooped up in there for over a week, so Nate and Pascal have been taking turns checking in to keep him company,” she told them.

“That's admirable, but I expect him to report for duty when his shift starts,” the commander pointed out.

“I'll get him,” Asia offered.

“Very well. When you do, bring him up to speed. The Astro Omega Ship is in the shipyard. I want the two of you to head over there and take a look at the transwarp drive. It currently will not go past transwarp 4. Its designed to do triple that,” he said.

At the mere mention of the Astro Omega Ship, Serenity’s ears seemed to perk up, and there was an uneasy feeling in her gut. Though she didn’t say a word, it was as though Ella could feel her restlessness. More importantly, Serenity noticed that Ella noticed, but both remained silent.

“I’m no engineer, sir. I don’t know how much help I’ll be,” she mentioned.

“Ensign Carson has an understanding of transwarp drives, at least that’s what his SPD admissions forms said. And with your... *unique* way of seeing things, that implant of yours may pick up a defect our engineers missed,” Commander Tate explained.

“Yes, sir,” she said.

“And me, sir?” Pascal asked, awaiting an assignment.

The commander paused. Though he didn’t say anything, Ella quickly picked up on the uneasy tension that seemed to wash over the commander. She knew exactly what it was about, but also knew it wasn’t her place to say anything.

“Lieutenant, you have the day off. Study, train, head over the Sim-U-Deck. Whatever you like, but you are officially off duty,” he said.

“Aye, sir,” Pascal said. The tone of confusion was obvious to everyone in the room, not just Ella, who had a knack for picking up the emotions of others.

“That is all, dismissed,” he said.

One by one, they stood up, exiting the briefing room, except for Pascal, who waited until everyone had left and the doors slid closed. Once they were gone, he stood at attention.

“Sir, have I failed to perform my duties to your satisfaction?” he asked.

“No, Pascal. Not at all. You continue to go above and beyond the call of duty,” he stated.

“So, if I may ask, sir, why am I being relieved of duty for the day? If there something I can do to...” he was interrupted.

“At ease, Lieutenant,” he said. Pascal visibly loosened up, but still at attention to give the proper respect to a superior officer. “Have a seat, Pascal,” Pascal sat down directly across from the commander. “I know that diplomatic tensions between your race and the Anurian people are at

an all time high. I felt it best if..." he stopped, trying to choose his words carefully. "... to keep things civil on base, I think it best if..."

"Permission to speak freely, sir?" he requested.

"By all means."

"The Xybrian people were enslaved by the Anurians, and many still are, but SPD wouldn't allow that on Earth. Its why most Anurians left Earth, taking my people with them. I don't hold any ill will towards them; it was just the way we did things, and my people were happy to be of service. It gives us purpose, meaning. I like to think that Garr and I are becoming friends, and if he is able to put aside the bigotry of our worlds, so I am," Pascal said.

"Very noble of you, Lieutenant, but not all Anurians feel that way, and Garr's father is on the high counsel of the Anurian Citadel. He may not take kindly to you," he mentioned.

"If you're worried about my feelings being hurt, or if violence will break out, I can assure you that is not the case. Xybrian's know their place. We serve," he said.

"But you don't *have* to serve, Pascal. Don't you get that? You don't have to be a slave."

"With all due respect, as a human your view on slavery is very limited. The Xybrian are non aggressive, peaceful people. It is our sincerest wish to serve, and the Anurians provided that. We were never forced, it was our choice to serve. It is instilled in us from birth that the only by relieving the burdens of others can we earn our way to the Elysium Fields after death," Pascal explained.

Commander Tate was obviously uncomfortable, but did his best to remain professional. "We deal with over 67 different species in this branch of SPD alone, and we do our best to respect the religious beliefs of other races, but Anurians backed out of the Interplanetary treaties. We are not allied with them, and Garr is the only Anurian who serves at SPD. I know you mean well, but I don't want this situation to escalate in any way," he told him.

"I understand, sir. I will carry out of orders," he said proudly. "May I be excused, sir?"

"You're dismissed, Lieutenant."

"Thank you, sir," Pascal said, standing up and saluting the commander before exiting the room.

Nathaniel sat on his knees at Garr's bedside, clutching his rosary, silently praying for his friend to make a full recovery. Garr was hooked to machines to monitor his progress, and had been since returning for their mission. While Nathaniel didn't have much experience with the Anurians, but he also felt as though he didn't have to. He came to SPD to experience what the galaxy had to offer, and he knew that not everyone was going to be human. He'd seen a few different species while in high school, and it never really mattered much to him. They were his peers, his friends, and Garr was no different.

Garr was every bit of seven feet tall with dark green, scaly skin. Nathaniel hadn't noticed until a few days ago, but there were also gills on either side of Garr's neck, which opened and closed to resemble breathing.

When they first met, he wasn't the first impression he was hoping for, but as they had served together, they had grown to have a mutual respect for one another. Garr wasn't conscious most of the time, and the times he were he was barely coherent, but that wasn't the point. Nathaniel felt it was important that when Garr finally did wake up, that seeing a friendly face would help, so he and Pascal had been taking shifts just sitting with Garr as they waited for him to recover.

"You're a good friend, ensign," the doctor said as he walked into the room, placing his hand on Nathaniel's shoulder. It was enough to make Nathaniel open his eyes and look up.

"I just don't want him to wake up and feel like he was alone," he said.

"He's going to be out until we can perform the transfusion. Its likely he will never know you were here," the doctor said.

"I'll know."

"I understand, ensign."

"I come here every evening and pray for him, then again in the morning before my shift. As a matter of fact," he glanced down at his watch, realizing the time. He quickly stood up. "Aw man, I'm late," he said.

"Stand down ensign, its fine," Asia said as she walked into the infirmary.

The doctor walked over to Garr, reading over his charts to check on his progress.

"How mad was Commander Tate that I wasn't at the briefing? Did his forehead wrinkle up and he do that scoffy thing he does?" he asked.

"It's fine, we covered for you. But you and I need to head over to the shipyard. He wants us to take a look at a transwarp drive," she said.

“That’s my area of expertise. I’ve read all the manuals and specs on all the galaxy class ships, especially transwarp drives,” he said eagerly.

“Those books are like the size of a small tank. You’re telling me you read *all* of them? There are like, hundreds of them.”

He shrugged his shoulders. “I like to read.”

“Well the commander seems to think that the two of us might see something the engineers didn’t. You ready to head over there?”

“Yes, sir. One moment, sir,” he said professionally, turning back to Garr. He placed his rosary in Garr’s hand, then closed Garr’s hand slightly so it wouldn’t fall. “Get well, my friend,” Nathaniel said, then turned back to Asia.

“I didn’t know you were the religious type,” she mentioned as the two of them walked out of the infirmary together.

“I was just praying that he recover,” he said.

“Well, when his folks get here, they’ll do the transfusion and the doc thinks he’ll be just fine,” she assured him.

“Thank God,” Nathaniel sighed.