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PROLOGUE FROM THE NOVEL

**STAR TREK:
CAPTAIN'S GLORY**

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WITH
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BASED ON *STAR TREK*
AND *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*
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PROLOGUE HAILING FREQUENCIES

U.S.S. ENTERPRISE NCC-1701

STARDATE UNKNOWN

Sometimes it was Harry Mudd, and sometimes it was Kodos. But this time, when the turbolift doors parted, it was the Gorn who charged him.

Kirk stumbled backward as ivory claws slashed the air.

He lost his footing, fell to the deck in the corridor of his ship, kept scrabbling back to avoid the inevitable.

The Gorn advanced, one heavy, deliberate step after another. Its obsidian blade flashed with each strobe of the red alert warning lights, gleamed with the deep, rich color of blood.

"I weary of the chase."

Each word was guttural, hissed.

"Wait for me... I shall be merciful and ssswift."

Kirk froze, no longer able to move, even to save himself. The Gorn towered over him, arm raised for the killing stroke, its muscles bunched beneath its scales. Its breath enveloped him with the stench of rotting meat, of death, defeat.

But defeat was nothing Kirk could accept, and in his primal rejection of death, he regained control of his body, kicked at the creature's knees.

Startled by its prey's defiance, the Gorn twisted to the side.

Kirk seized his chance. Leapt to his feet. Ran from the turbolift.

"We destroyed intruderssss, as I will destroy you!"

But the Gorn's vicious threat was drowned out by the blare of alarms.

Kirk staggered as the Enterprise shuddered beneath his feet.

Even with no communication with his chief engineer, Kirk knew Scotty was pushing the ship's engines past their limits. He could feel their vibrations as they strained to break free of the planet's crushing gravity.

At the same time, Kirk heard the rising howl of wind that told him his ship was entering the atmosphere—a trajectory she'd never survive. Not at this speed without shields to protect her.

"Captain Kirk to the bridge."

Uhura was calling him, but he had no way of replying. There were no comm stations on any of the bulkheads, only phaser and disruptor scorches from the battle with the Klingon boarding party.

Kirk raced down the corridor until he reached another turbo-lift.

Instinctively, he braced himself as its doors slipped open.

The car was empty.

He rushed inside, twisted the activator.

"Bridge." The word was little more than a gasp.

"Captain Kirk!"

Uhura's voice was more insistent. But Kirk still couldn't answer her. The comm station in the turbolift car had been shattered by a sword blade.

The decks pulsed by. The car slowed.

Kirk had just an instant to realize that he couldn't have reached the bridge so quickly, when the doors parted and the Gorn lunged in, a tidal wave of green.

"Earthling captain!"

Kirk ducked and the deadly blade carved empty air as Kirk rammed his shoulder into the Gorn's chest, trying to force the creature out of the lift. But the doors had already shut. The car began to move again.

Kirk was trapped, nowhere to run.

He blocked the Gorn's downward stab. He punched the creature's muzzle. The car rocked as the Enterprise was buffeted by thickening atmosphere.

"To the bridge!" Uhura's voice cried out over the ship's speakers.

The next slash of the blade caught Kirk across his chest, slicing his shirt, drawing blood.

The Gorn growled in triumph, struck again.

Kirk moved by training, by instinct, deflected the Gorn's follow-through by grabbing its massive green hand, forcing the blade back and up and into the creature's thick neck.

The Gorn's shriek was deafening in the cramped car. Gouts of purple blood sprayed from the gaping wound as the creature threw itself from wall to wall.

The heat of the dying beast burned into Kirk as the Gorn fell against him, crushing him against the unyielding doors.

Kirk struggled to free himself even as the creature's life ended. The Gorn slid to the floor of the turbolift car, its huge body shivered once in death, then stilled.

The car slowed.

Kirk looked down at his chest, his shirt smeared with Gorn blood mingled with his own.

The slashing wound was deep. But there was no time to get to McCoy in sickbay. Not with the Enterprise so close to destruction.

So close to death.

The car doors opened.

Kirk ran from the turbolift, onto his bridge.

He called for Uhura.

No answer.

Instead, at her station, he saw a white object with pentagonal sides, small enough to fit in his hand.

Instinctively he knew the object was Uhura. She had been reduced to her basic chemical components.

Kirk couldn't remember why it was important that he had that information. He just knew it was.

His gaze shifted to the main viewscreen where hellish flames leapt among the stars at warp.

The Enterprise was flying through the Galactic Barrier. In the very same moment, she also screamed through the atmos-

phere of an unknown planet... at the same time that her engines tore themselves apart while her crew was reduced to—

“It’s a dream!” Kirk shouted his realization, held out his fists in protest. “It’s the dream.”

But this time, unlike all the other times, whether it was Harry Mudd or Kodos who pursued him, the knowledge that he was dreaming was not enough to let him wake.

This time, he still fought to keep his balance on the shifting deck.

Kirk stumbled to his chair, clung to it, staring at the flames on the viewscreen.

“Spock! Analysis!”

Spock turned from his science station, his familiar face ice blue in the glow from his holographic viewer.

“Do I have your attention?” Spock calmly inquired.

“Yes—tell me what we’re facing.” Kirk took a step toward Spock.

But as fast as Kirk could advance, Spock shrank back, receding from him as the bridge itself began dissolving in a cloud of dark sand.

Kirk felt as if he himself was shrinking, his whole existence swirling down some unseen vortex, into the compression of an all-devouring black hole.

“We’re life, Jim,” Spock called from the distance. “But not as they know it.”

Kirk reached out to his friend, wanting, needing, to understand.

“Spock, explain...”

But Spock’s only answer was a far-off echo: “Do I have your attention...”

* * *

The instant the black spiral claimed him, Kirk, at last, woke on his new ship, the *Belle Rêve*.

He sat up on the side of his bunk in his narrow cabin—the finest on the ship despite its size.

The sweat was cold on his forehead.

His heartbeat thundered in his ears.

The dream had changed. Not just the Gorn... Spock.

CAPTAIN'S GLORY

And that changed what Starfleet and Admiral Kathryn Janeway had steadfastly refused to believe for more than a year. Somewhere, Kirk knew beyond doubt, Spock was still alive. Spock had called out to him.
"We're life, Jim. But not as they know it."
Spock had Kirk's attention.

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