

# *The Discovery*

by

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*Special Notice: This one story unfortunately had its last minute edit during recording, what follows is what the story was before recording.*

## The Discovery

"Kat-lu you need to see this," Lak-nu said holding a data disk out to Kat-lu.

"Can it wait? I'm on my way out to the arboretum with Sha-ka." said while turning and trying to get away, before any more interruptions could catch him.

"One of the deep probes may have found another civilization," Lak-nu bellowed in the empty corridor.

Kat-lu came to a dead stop. His face jumping between sadness and happiness. He sighed and turned around to face Lak-nu.

"How sure are we," Kat-lu asked.

"It's at least a 20% chance the data people are saying."

"Very well, get word to Sha-ka that I won't be able to join her this evening. She won't be happy about this. Neither will you, if this turns out to be another N654 case."

Lak-nu swallowed hard, and gave a quick nod of consent. He followed Kat-lu back to his office, and handed him the data disk.

Lak-nu glanced briefly at the picture of Sha-ka sighed and then quickly put the data disk in the reader.

Soon a star field was showing on the screen, along with a date stamp that placed the recording about 14 strands old.

"Begin play back," instructed Kat-lu.

In angles so minor that the untrained eye would miss them the stars began to move, ever so slightly. A red dot came on in the center of the screen to indicate where the listening equipment was currently aimed at.

The dot moved slowly to a binary star system, and noise began to be produced out of the speakers, most of it was the common noise you would expect. However he could hear something not quite right.

"Display a waveform of what is being played," instructed Kat-lu.

The stars disappeared, and in their place came up a visual representation of the sound. For the most part, it looked identical to every other binary star system that had ever been examined.

"Highlight expected display of a binary star."

The waveform turned mostly blue, with some sections remaining black.

"Remove highlighted sound."

Very faint, but it was there. Not all of the waveform form had disappeared.

"Amplify remaining sound."

The sound pattern increased to a clearly noticeable amount. Kat-lu's second heart began to beat more quickly.

Could it really be, he wondered to himself.

"Play sound."

The sound started, at first it was just the background noise in all space, but then subtly there was a change, a click or whistle, Kat-lu wasn't sure which. A few seconds later another sound echoed back, slightly different pitch, but similar in pattern.

The sounds went on for a few seconds, just clicks and whistles as far as Kat-lu was able to make out, but it wasn't a natural sound, it wasn't rhythmic enough to be normal radiation.

Kat-lu sat back in his chair. His tail twitching nervously.

"Are there any detected planets in that system?"

The screen displayed, "Searching" in response to its latest inquiry.

"Binary system X3423, is believed to have at least 5 planets based on the light wobble effect. Visual confirmation has not yet been made by any probes," replied the screen.

"Locate any probes or missions near that star system."

"Searching" displayed once again on the screen.

Kat-lu's tail switched again, he hated to have to wait.

"Nearest probe is Deep Space 4A6. It is currently twenty-three light years from the system."

"How soon before that probe will reach the system given current orders?"

"Deep Space 4A6, will not reach the destination for another twenty-five chands."

Hrmphh, that is way to long to wait.

"How long would it take a mission to make it there."

"A mission leaving Olide would take 2 Chum 3 Strands to get there."

"Forward this information to Mission Control, with my suggestion that system X3423 deserves special consideration."

"Request Acknowledge. Sending Information."

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Fleet Commander Ra-ka log. 1 chum out of space dock. Maintenance crew has finished upgrading Deep Space 4A6, with more modern technology and it has been renamed Deep Space 4X6. It will now begin a 23 chand exploration of the Filli-strand.

Clearer signals are now being picked up from system X3423. While no closer to understanding what is being said, linguistics and mathematicians have confirmed the pattern is repeating. Perhaps it's some kind of distress call, seems to be the most popular belief currently.

We are sending the clearer signals we are receiving now with this data packet, in case linguistics there has any better success in deciphering the message.

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The com signal in her quarter's beeped. She groggily opened one eye and looked at the clock sitting on the table next to her bed. Fleet time was 03:45. The com signal beeped again.

"What," she hissed, turning one ear toward the speaker.

"Sorry to wake you Fleet Commander," a very nervous voice said on the other side.

"However I was told you wanted to be alerted when we were about to enter the system."

"Come to a complete stop, I want to be on the bridge when we cross into the system. I'll be right there," she said as both eyes popped open, and her ears came to full attention.

As she attempted to move, she became aware, that she was going to have to dislodge someone first.

"Lights, minimum level," she said to the room. With in seconds there was just barely enough light for her to see, without waking anyone around her.

Three of her cubs were currently nursing, while the others were at her feet quietly sleeping.

"Shen-ka, Ra-lu, Azur-ka you must let me up," she said gently trying to push them away without waking them.

"Is it morning already," Ra-lu mewed in a very tired voice.

"It is, but you go back to sleep, I have important matters on the bridge to take care of."

The three cubs, all let go, and were quickly back to sleep with their tummy's full and their minds still full of sleep.

She slipped into her command robe, and left the room.

When she reached the bridge, she was almost fully awake, with only a straggling yawn escaping her mouth.

"Status," she said as she sat down on her chair in the center of the bridge.

"All ships at standby, we are half of a light year from the system," her second in command reported.

"Linguistics, any further progress," she said after hitting a button on her chair.

"I'm sorry Ra-ka, it does seem to be a form of communication, but there isn't enough here for us to be able to form any language structure at all," replied the voice from the chair.

"Keep working on it, let me know if anything changes. Ra-ka out. Security, do you have groups ready to go in if need be?"

"Yes, Ra-ka. We have two hundred ready to go, and another two hundred on stand by if the situation calls for it," replied her chief of security.

“Medical,” Ra-ka said touching another button on the chair, “Are we ready to offer assistance if need be?”

“Yes Ra-ka,” replied the medical officer on the other end.

“All hands,” Ra-ka said after hitting a third button to talk to the entire fleet. “As you are probably aware, we will be at our destination shortly. We still have been unable to find a usable pattern to the communication we have received thus far. Let's keep our heads about us, and be smart about meeting this group.”

She paused a few moments, and then released the fleet button.

“Helm, lets do the last leg of this trip.”

“Aye Ra-ka,” the helm person responded. The ship jumped a little, and then nearby stars were moving by, almost unseen.

Two clips later, the planet came into view.

“Sensors full sweep, what do we have here,” Ra-ka snapped.

“Signal appears to be coming from a satellite in orbit of the planet. Not able to detect any life on the planet, however it does appear there are a great many of unnatural caves beneath what may have been a city of some kind,”

“Atmosphere?”

“Oxygen is at higher levels than we are used to, however search teams should have no ill effects.”

“Commander Kir-ru,” Ra-ka said as she hit a button on her arm rest.

“Yes, Ra-ka,” snapped a quick response.

“Is your team ready?”

“Yes, Ra-ka. We just await the word.”

“Success Commander,” she almost purred.

“Aye, Ra-ka. Departing in two tics.”

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“Touch down in what appears to have been the center of a town. Environmental sensors say the air is breathable. They also say its 300 degrees out there, a bit warm for my taste.” Pilot Clen-ta said looking over her shoulder.

“Clen-ta, stay with the shuttle. Be ready for an emergency lift off if we need it. Teams lets go,” Kir-ru said.

The troops exited the shuttle. Guards on the outside with phase rifles, with teams of medics, engineers, and linguistics filling the center of a circle.

“Commander, readings indicate if we enter that building, we may find an entrance to one of the caves,” a young engineer on his first off world mission said, as he looked up from his link.

“Lets move,” ordered Kir-ru.

“It looks like this was the center of a war zone at one time,” commented one of the guards as he looked at the buildings around him.

Slowly, cautiously, they approached the building.

“What is it made of, I don't recognize the material,” Kir-ru asked one of the engineers.

“Unsure sir, it appears to be a combination of crushed rock and tree fibers. I've never seen a material like it before,” the engineer replied.

They approached the door, and noticed that all of the glass had been blown inside. The door itself was locked, so they just stepped through where the glass was supposed to have been.

“Kir-ru to Clen-ta, prepare for live broadcast to the fleet.”

“Fleet communications established,” she replied after a couple of moments.

“Ra-ka, are you getting our signal?”

“Loud and clear. Image is sharp, we are watching.”

The group went through the lower level of the building looking at ever nook and

cranny they were able to find. Some of the troops attempted to go higher in the building, however the building creaked and moaned so noisily it was decided to ignore the upper floors.

Ensign Zha-ta was the first to find the way down stairs. She turned on her arm light as the light from above disappeared. There were many pillars all of a non-descript gray color.

She finished descending the stairs and then approached the nearest one.

It's huge, no way it needed to be this big just for structure support.

With her other hand, she scanned the pillar and found it came back as being hollow. However it also detected something further in. After passing 12 rows of identical columns, there was a huge empty space. Her hand held scanner indicated the odd reading was still coming from in front of her somewhere, in the darkness.

Her whiskers reflexively twitched as she noticed the light seemed to get swallowed by the darkness. Her ears twitched all around to find anything while her feet followed her eyes to the source of the signals.

Her scanning device told her it had only been twenty ticks since she picked up the signal, however it felt like she had been searching for it, for a clip already. It took her a moment to realize, but in the darkness she had actually passed by the source of the signal.

Normal visible light, she found, was absorbed by the pillar, and therefore it remained hidden, unless you looked for something swallowing visible light. After a bit of searching, she identified where it had to be.

The fur on her arm seemed to be pointing to the pillar. She reached out to try to touch it, and it sent a small static charge back to her.

She didn't notice it at first, but slowly gradually the pillar began to get brighter, while it was still black itself, there was a low light shield around the pillar. She heard something moving on the floor, sweeping her light on it, she found a box that had a tube that ran to the pillar.

Her scanning device, indicated the power levels had climbed for a little while, but were now dropping quickly. It appeared that the power levels would soon drop below what they had been when she first detected them.

"Ensign Zha-ta, to Kir-ru, I've discovered something," she said into her transmitter.

Silence answered her. She adjusted for different signals, thinking it was just the pillars that were absorbing her signals. After being answered only by silence for every signal, she began to wonder if it was the pillar absorbing the communication signals.

She turned tail and ran to the stairs. When she reached the gray pillars, her communication device started to buzz.

"Ensign Zha-ta, here," she said breathing hard.

"Ensign, where have you been," barked Kir-ru.

"Found something sir," she said with her breathing more under control.

Soon almost everyone surrounded the pillar, to study it. Small groups had formed with people grouped by professions whispering to each other comparing notes and examinations of the pillar. The small box, had been found to have some kind of markings on it, a picture of it was taken and sent to the ship in orbit.

The linguistic group on the surface, had no success in translating the markings around the box. The engineering section, figured it was some kind of power adapter, however without knowing what kind of power requirements it had, they didn't want to run the risk of destroying the circuits attached to it.

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In one of the ships in orbit, the image of box came up to the on board linguistic team, who had access to the entire library of knowledge for the Olediem race.

The corporal at the station prepared the image to be examined by the computer. Adjusting the balance and other features. When the image was perfect, he had the computer start the search, on the off chance that anything would be identified.

The computer processed the image for two clips, Ra-ka contacting quite often to see if anything had resulted yet, as unlikely as that was. At the end of two clips, it came up with a translation of the sign.

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The senior staff of the ships all sat in the main conference room, to discuss what the computer discovered.

This is it, my first big moment, Corporal Ren-ka thought as she stood in front of the screen that was before her audience.

Ra-ka motioned for everyone to quiet down so that the briefing could start. When everyone was quiet she motioned for Ren-ka to start the briefing.

The lights in the room dimmed as the screen behind her came to life. It showed a fully enhanced image of the box from the surface.

"This is the first real sample of writing we have seen from the planet. We corrected the image for various things, and ran it through the computer. After examining all known writing styles, it found that this was from a race who called themselves the Oligarcy," Ren-ka began.

Her audience glanced at her with blank faces, some turned to talk to their neighbors, but it was obvious, no one in this group had heard of them.

"Who was the Oligarcy," Ren-ka asked after the group came to the conclusion it wasn't common knowledge.

"The Oligarcy, we had contact with when first started sending out the first deep space probes, two hundred chands ago. They were a race who like us at the time, hadn't developed any way of moving close to the speed of light. Our communications were limited to just high speed communications via our probes. They had developed a way of opening small controlled worm holes that burst communication could be sent through. They agreed to share this technology with us, this is still the basis of our Deep Space Probe control even now."

"What happened to the communication, if it had been so common," Ren-ka voiced the question on everyones mind.

"We don't know. The last communication we received from them, was that something appeared in the sky. They were going to get back to us when they were able to. Our records indicated we tried for a little over a stum, with no response. We assumed that they didn't survive whatever appeared in their skies. As a side note, when the first testings of the first jump technology was being tested, there are notes that indicate finding them, was going to be one of the primary missions of the fleet."

"Well, we all know this didn't make it on to the final list of mission objectives, but still it appears we can cross it off the list. Tren-ka forward this information to the landing crew, along with all information as to how to translate any other writing that is discovered."

"Aye Ren-ka," Tren-ka replied.

"If there is nothing else, lets get back to work people," Ren-ka said looking at the group who surrounded her.

A few whiskers twitched, a few ears moved, but no one said anything.

"Very well, meeting adjourned, good work Ren-ka."

Everyone stood up to leave, Ren-ka was a little surprised when she found herself purring as she left the room.

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"Communication received, Ren-ka. We will be proceeding with the mission now. Kir-ru out," he said as he closed the channel.

"Tre-ku, do you have enough information now to give the circuits power," Kir-ru said turning to the lead engineer.

"Yes sir, I believe we do. It will take us about a clip to make the needed adjustments, but I believe our standard portable power supply will be able to handle the needs."

“Very well, Tre-ku, with all do haste,” Kir-ru said while looking over other information in the transmission packet. When he looked up, he saw that Tre-ku had already blended in with other black and white furs.

The clip went by so fast, Kir-ru didn't know where the time went when Tre-ku told him they were ready to give the outlet power.

With in just a few tics everyone was once again standing by the column. The column had stopped visually showing any difference than the rest. Had it not been the small locator beacon placed next to the outlet, it could have been nearly impossible to have found once again.

Kir-ru couldn't tell which of the engineers were making final adjustments, to the energy source. The column seemed to be sucking up all the light now, his eyes couldn't adjust enough to make out the individual patterns of the engineering team.

“Turning on power in 5....4.....3....2....1, power engaged,” he heard Tre-ku say.

At first, nothing obvious happened, but ever so slowly, the center column began to come to life. The column became surrounded by a holographic screen, which had a display on it. It seemed to indicate that something was charging.

Some of the ground forces were becoming bored, as nothing appeared to be happening for almost a clip. The engineering group however was buzzing comparing readings from all different sensors they had with them. Kir-ru tried to find out what was going on, and all they said that he understood was that it was still gaining power.

Without warning, the room seemed to raise light levels by quite a bit. Most everyone found themselves covering their eyes with their paws until they could adapt to the increasing light.

The column started showing a spectrum of colors. Then the colors took shape. A very odd looking figure grew out of the colors. With a circular head, and much larger torso than they were used to.

The image appeared to be speaking, but no one was able to understand it at first.

“Is the translating software functioning,” Kir-ru barked after it appeared the hologram was waiting on a response.

“It is sir, we are just having some difficulties with the translating of the speech. We don't actually have anything on record of what their speech sounded like. We always spoke to each other in text bursts,” one of the linguistic people explained.

“Can we open a communication channel via text then,” one of the engineering group asked.

“I do have the channel and encryption we used to use. Our modern equipment can still communicate in that fashion with a few adjustments,” someone from the communication group responded.

“See to it,” Kir-ru barked frustrated at being this close, and yet still so far away.

“Communication channel open, transmitting greeting now,” Clen-ta announced a few tics later.

The hologram changed, instead of the figure that was there, Oligarcian symbols were being displayed rapidly.

“Receiving transmission now, enabling speech mode,” Clen-ta announced.

“Greetings. Communication protocol suggests you are the Olediem race, is that correct,” the communication said.

“Yes, I am called Kir-ru, who am I addressing,” he asked.

“I am the Last Guardian of the planet.”

“You issued the call for help?”

“Yes, the remains of the entire society, is beneath your feet. Power reserves have been low for many of your chands now. Only a few hundred are left, out of several million.”

“Are they in stasis pods of some kind,” asked one of the medical personnel.

“Yes,” replied the guardian.

The medical teams started talking with the ship, about additional materials they may need for removing the people from the stasis pods.

“Can you give us medical information about the people in the pods,” asked another of the medical professionals.

“Full medical records for each person is next to the pods, I will work on translating it to your language.”

A portion of the floor slid open, and a small amount of light was seen from the room below. Several members of different teams walked down the staircase.

Several thousand tubes were laid out in a fairly orderly fashion. A layer of dust had settled on all of the panels and tubes. Several people were wiping dust off various tubes and consoles.

The lead medical people were standing in front of a main console, while the Guardian, showed them all of the records from people in the different tubes. It then followed up with information on how to restore the tube's occupant to being a living breathing being again.

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The shuttle landed, portions of the ground crew stood at attention, next to the shuttle. As the door opened, everyone slapped a salute as Ra-ka stepped out of the shuttle. She looked around, a few of the Oligarcy were walking around, with looks of shock and awe on their faces.

“How many survivors,” she asked surveying the area.

“So far we have brought back two hundred, the doctors inform me that at least seven hundred more will be coming out in good health,” replied Kir-ru.

“Anyone from their government?”

“I believe right now we there is a Corporal Siglerismo, in recovery. He is the highest ranking person for military we have located. The computer who controlled this area says that all of the civilian leadership were in tubes that another Guardian had control over. It hasn't heard from that Guardian in approximately 9 chands.”

“Very well, we will of course examine those areas ourselves, but for now let me know when Corporal Siglerismo, is available to talk.”

“Aye Ra-ka,” Kir-ru said.



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