

PRIME DIRECTIVE FEDERATION

PD20
MODERN



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COMPLETE DATAFILE



PD20M FEDERATION

The Good Guys of the Star Fleet Universe

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ANOTHER NEW WORLD

by John Sickels

Planetary Survey Log, October 24, Y166, 0815 Hours Local Time, Dr. Kenneth Atchison Recording

"We are approaching planet MW-537-V. For the last two hours, the *Speedwell* has tried to contact the advance scout who preceded us to the planet six months ago. So far he hasn't answered. We will be directly above his encampment in ten minutes and hopefully will make contact then. Assuming no complications, the team will shuttle down with our equipment later this afternoon. Our compliments to Captain Kuo and the crew of the *Speedwell*, who have made our journey here comfortable. I personally recommend that Luna University renew the *Speedwell's* transport contract for the coming fiscal year. Log recorder off."

Atchison's cabin, *Speedwell*, Orbiting Planet MW-537-V, October 24, Y166, 0822 Hours Local Time

"That was boring," teased Maiah. Ken flipped the recorder switch off and turned to face his wife. She pulled a black t-shirt down around her body, her torso twisting in the cramped confines of their cabin. "You really need to make those more interesting." She winked at him, her blonde Alpha-Centauran locks framing her thin face. It always drove him crazy.

"Let's keep the interesting stuff for our personal logs," he replied. He got up from his chair and threw his arms around his wife, planting a passionate kiss. Ken planned on throwing her onto the bunk, but they stumbled backwards instead, off-balance, crashing onto the cabin deck plating of the *Speedwell*.

"Ouch, bad man!" She pretended to be angry, then kissed him. "Bad man" was a common AlphaCent phrase of endearment. It rubbed many Earth humans the wrong way, but Ken had grown used to it over the years.

The intercom interrupted their passion. "Bridge to Atchison."

They broke their kiss. "Atchison here."

"We'll be in orbit in about five minutes, Doctor, in case you want to be on the bridge."

"Let the rest of the team know, too. We're on our way, Captain."

"So much for. . ." Maiah's voice tailed off.

"Yeah, it's going to get busy. But we'll find the time."

"I always make sure of that, bad man." She kissed him hungrily.

Bridge, *Speedwell*

The *Speedwell's* small bridge was even more cramped than usual, the seven members of Luna University Plan-

etary Survey Team Nine crowding in to look at the planet on the viewscreen.

Speedwell was a Free Trader, one of thousands of externally similar, general-utility cargo ships around the Federation. It was a starship, with all the nominal capabilities of a fleet heavy cruiser, just not as many of them. It had a crew of twenty instead of 400, five security men instead of 50 Marines, one tractor beam and one transporter instead of three of each, a medic instead of a surgical staff, half of the cargo volume, about the same passenger accommodations, a pair of phasers (and no photon torpedoes) instead of a dozen, enough sensors to scan a planet in about a week instead of a few hours, but whatever you wanted a starship to do, *Speedwell* could do it. Some Free Traders were fitted to carry more or fewer passengers, to have more weapons, or with extensive laboratory facilities (or none at all). The Star Fleet Marines even used modified Free Traders to land tanks on alien planets.

MW-537-V, a very typical Class-M world, filled the screen as the ship took up position over the scout's encampment. This new world featured two large continents, plus numerous islands and archipelagos. The atmospheric envelope had a slightly purplish tinge.

"Geosynchronous orbit established," said the Tellarite first mate. "Still no answer to our hails."

"Take a sensor scan," said Kuo. "Any humanoids down there?" There was always the chance that something had happened to the scout.

"Checking . . . he's there, about three clicks from the camp . . . moving slowly. Looks like he's out for a walk or something. Probably doesn't have his communicator with him."

"Or he just doesn't care to answer," said Atchison.

"Well, do we keep hailing or do we just go down and knock?" asked Dr. Elur, the team's Andorian biologist and physician.

Rema Isabe, the team's Cygnan security officer, grunted his agreement.

"It's your call, Ken," said Kuo.

Atchison considered the options.

"Isabe, you beam down with me. We'll make sure everything is OK before the rest of you come down in the shuttles."

Encampment One, Southern Continent, Planet MW-537-V, October 24, Y166, 0902 Hours Local Time

Atchison and Isabe materialized a short distance from the encampment. They were on a steep hill overlooking a large open field, surrounded on two sides by a grove of trees. A shallow brook flanked the fourth side, water trickling gently towards a small lake about one kilometer dis-



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