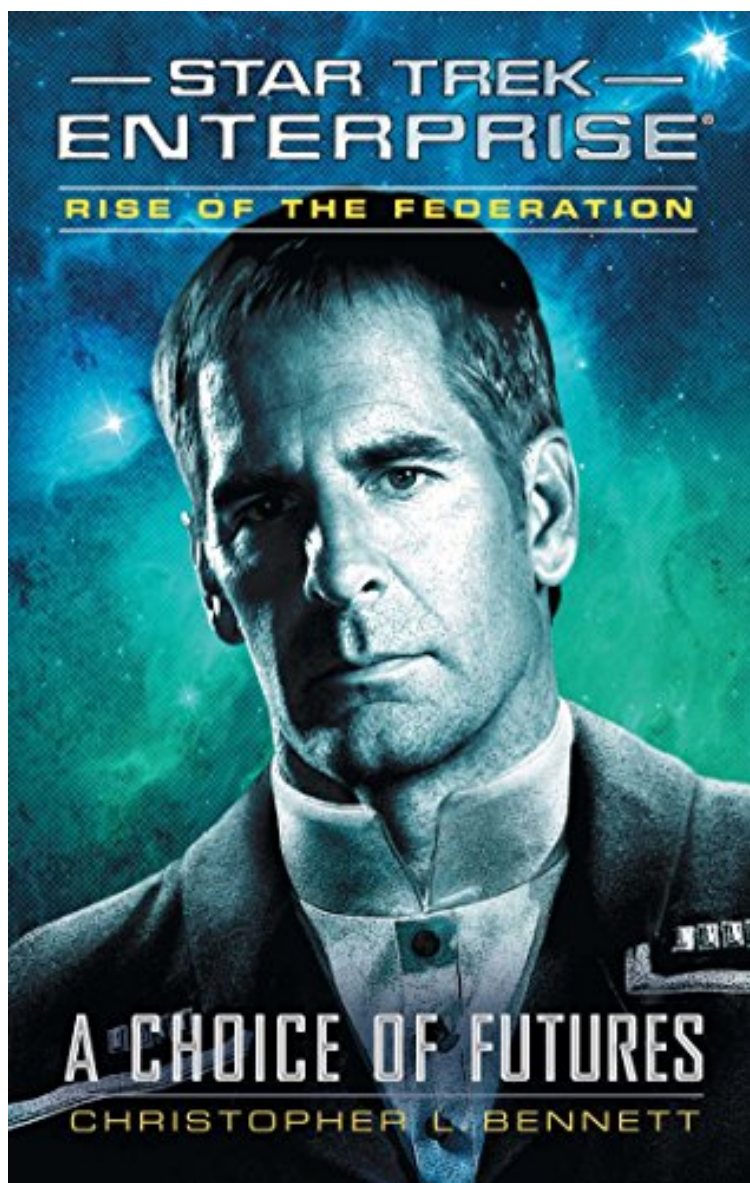


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Rise of the Federation: A Choice of Futures



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAn original novel set in the universe of Star Trek: Enterprise!A new nation has arisen from the ashes of the Romulan War: the United Federation of Planets, an unprecedented union of diverse species cooperating for the good of all. Admiral Jonathan Archerthe former captain of the Earth starship Enterprise, whose efforts made this union possibleenvvisions a vibrant Federation promoting galactic peace and a multispecies Starfleet dedicated to exploring strange new worlds. Archers former crewmates, including Captain TPol of the U.S.S. Endeavour and Captain Malcolm Reed of the U.S.S. Pioneer, work with him to secure that bright future. Yet others within the Federation see its purpose as chiefly military, a united defense

against a dangerous galaxy, while some of its neighbors view that military might with suspicion and fear. And getting the member nations, their space fleets, and even their technologies to work together as a unified whole is an ongoing challenge. When a new threat emerges from a force so alien and hostile that negotiation seems impossible, a group of unaligned worlds asks Starfleet to come to its defense, and the Federation leaders seize the opportunity to build their reputation as an interstellar power. But Archer fears the conflict is building toward an unnecessary war, potentially taking the young nation down a path it was never meant to follow. Archer and his allies strive to find a better solution...but old foes are working secretly to sabotage their efforts and ensure that the great experiment called the Federation comes to a quick and bloody end. , , 2013 CBS Studios, Inc. STAR TREK and related marks are trademarks of CBS Studios, Inc. All Rights Reserved.ExtraitStar Trek: Enterprise: Rise of the Federation: A Choice of Futures 1 September 25, 2162 Kemsar Colony, 10 Tauri IV HE COULD ONLY WATCH as the colony burned around him. A minute ago, it was the children hed been watching as theyd run through the bright blue grass of the colonys central square, using child-sized throwing sticks to try to hurl a ball through a ring that hovered above their heads on repulsors. They could have been human children back on Earth, if not for the color of the grass and trees, and if not for the subtle V-shaped notches between their brows. Some of the parents had been urging their children to victory, while other, less competitive-minded ones were content to let their kids just run and play, some recording the event with cameras while others simply basked in the light of the bright yellow-white star overhead. And then something had come out of that light, faint specks against the suns disk. Before they could even be resolved into ships, they had begun firing, bolts of fierce yellow-green plasma tearing into the ground, the buildings, the people. The parents in the square, quicker to understand what was happening, began to panic before the children did. A few managed to stay calm, tried to rally the others to gather up the children and flee to safety. But then a plasma bolt tore through the metal sculpture at the center of the square, sending out shrapnel that felled many of the parents and children nearby. The shock wave left him looking up at the sky from ground level as bodies fell around him. The ships flew overhead, and he recognized them: angular bronze polyhedrons, most only big enough for two people, but undeniably powerful. He watched helplessly as one of the larger, more elongated ships set down in the square and opened to disgorge the raiders, who began methodically shooting down the surviving parents, seizing the screaming, crying children and dragging them back to the ship. He knew those faces too: bald, cantaloupe-green, textured like stucco. The faces of Suliban. One of the raiders reached him, loomed above him, a rifle barrel pointed at his head. He studied that mottled face closely, unafraid of the weapon, knowing he could do nothing to affect what he saw. He could only watch as the raider crouched, a hand reaching forward to fill his field of view... leaving only blackness. There! Do you see? With a heavy sigh, Admiral Jonathan Archer reached up and took the virtual display visor off his head, the blackness lifting away to reveal the gray-walled conference room of the Grentra, a warship in the Tandar fleet. His hands shook slightly as he lowered it, and he made an effort to still them, feeling a twinge of frustration. Doctor Phlox had assured him the latest round of treatments would hold off the tremors for months. But after a moment, he realized that his shakiness was probably an emotional response to the sensory playback hed just experienced, recovered from a proud parents holorecorder by the Tandar soldiers whod come to Kemsar Colony to aid the survivors and investigate the brutal raid. Anyone would have been shaken after watching the attack from the vantage point of one of its victims. Archer gathered himself and turned his gaze to the portly, dark-featured Tandar who had spoken. Valk wore the quilted gray tunic of the Tandar military, his twin black sashes declaring him an officer and the golden rank pins on the sides of his brown leather collar marking him as a general. No ones disputing what happened here, General Valk. Its a terrible crime, and the Federation extends its sympathies for your loss. Sympathies dont heal mortal wounds, Admiral, Valk fired back. Nor do lies. Let me remind you, the only reason we agreed to tolerate your upstart governments grant of asylum to Suliban refugees was in exchange for your assurances that there would be no Suliban retaliation for our... disputes with them over the years. Archer resisted an undiplomatic reply to the generals choice of words. They both knew the history perfectly well. In response to the Suliban Cabals decade-long war against the worlds of the Tandar Sector, the Tandar government had imprisoned innocent Suliban civilians, lifelong citizens of Tandar society, in brutal internment camps allegedly to protect them from the persecution of the masses or forced impression into the genetically enhanced ranks of the Cabal. It had been over eight years since the factions in the Temporal Cold War had ended their intrusions into the twenty-second century, leaving the Cabal with no instructions from the future to guide them or genetic enhancements to motivate them. The directionless Cabal had fragmented, some former members using their augmentations for petty piracy and

crime, others simply fleeing from the Tandarans, Klingons, and others whom theyd wronged in service to their twenty-eighth-century sponsors unknowable agendas. But it had been years more before the Tandar government, having killed or imprisoned most of the Cabals surviving leaders and suffering no further attacks, had consented to close the camps once and for all, under pressure from Tandar activists who had learned of the conditions there from former prisoners like the ones Archer had helped free a decade ago. But the Suliban had still faced fear and bigotry from many in the Tandar Sector, and while some had chosen to reclaim their homes there and try to rebuild their lives and relationships, many had chosen to resume their nomadic ways or relocate to other worlds, including some within the territory of the United Federation of Planets—the fledgling union of United Earth, the Confederacy of Vulcan, the Andorian Empire, the United Planets of Tellar, and the Alpha Centauri Concordium. Jonathan Archer, who had played a significant role in bringing that union about, had used his clout to persuade the Federation Council to grant the refugees asylum as one of its first acts. More importantly, hed persuaded the Tandar government to accept that grant, although in return theyd insisted that the Federation erase all records indicating that the Tandarans were aware of the Temporal Cold War, as part of some sort of disinformation campaign directed at the future. It sounded fishy to Archer, but hed gone along with it for the sake of the refugees. The Federation has kept its side of the bargain, he assured the general. Then why, Valk asked, have all three of these attacks been along the border closest to your territory? He nodded to his aide, a lean, ash-blond woman named Major Glith, to slide a data tablet across the table toward Archer. And why, the general went on, do the raiders weapons signatures read as consistent with Vulcan and Andorian firearms? The Vulcans and Andorians were fighting for a long time before they finally made peace, Archer said. Some of their weapons mustve fallen into other hands over the years. But which hands? Most of the Cabals members and resources have been accounted for by our intelligence agencies. Yet the biosignatures of these raiders, and he worked a control on his own tablet to send new data to the one before Archer, are not baseline Suliban. Nor do they correspond to any known enhancements, Glith added in a much cooler tone. Then they cant be Cabal, can they? Valk stood and leaned forward, trying to intimidate Archer with his bulk. Or maybe the Cabal has simply found a new set of sponsors willing to protect them from discovery and dole out a different form of genetic edge. Maybe defeating the Romulans has given you humans and your allies a taste for conquest, and youve decided to go after the Tandar Sector using Suliban as your shock troops! The Federation is not about expansionism. Isnt it? For generations, the Vulcan High Command imposed its benevolent interference on its neighbors, often at the point of a plasma cannon. Now they claim to have retreated into pacifism, but only after their human protgs rise to power with unprecedented speed, build a massive war fleet that drives the Romulans into retreat, and assimilate the once fiercely independent Andorian and Tellarite nations! Giving your so-called Federation of Planets the strongest battle fleet outside of the Klingon Empire as a result, even with the Vulcan fleet in mothballs. And no sooner have you dealt with the Romulans than you begin pressuring the Denobulans, Arkenites, and others to submit themselves to your rule as well. Were offering them equal partnership for mutual support and defense. And we dont force it on anyone who doesnt want it. Valk scoffed. Says the man who spent years forcibly interfering in the affairs of the Tandarans, the Klingons, the Mazarites This is getting us nowhere, General! Archer interrupted. The truth was, he couldnt offer a solid defense on this point. The Federation was too new, its identity and objectives still in flux. He knew that the minds behind the Federation saw its purpose as benevolent, but there was still much disagreement over how to fulfill that purpose, or how aggressively to pursue it. We can argue about the Federations intentions all day long, he continued, but it wont bring those raiders to justice or liberate the children they captured. I came here to offer you the means to do just that. How? If youre not in collusion with these Suliban, how can you track them down when we cannot? Because we know youre looking for the wrong thing. How do you know this? Glith asked. What do you propose we look for instead? Archer hesitated. I cant tell you that. I could tell you what I know, but youd never believe me without proof, and my sources are... highly classified.

The general scoffed. But what I can do is help you find the raiders and show you whos really behind them and help you get your children back. But youre gonna have to extend us a little trust. So that you can win your way into our good graces? Valk blustered. Maybe persuade us to submit to absorption into your Federation? Archer faced him squarely. So that those children wont have to live in slavery. Isnt that enough? Valk held his gaze firmly a while longer, reluctant to give any ground, but the reminder of what was truly at stake penetrated his armor, to his credit. Explain to us how you propose to track down the Suliban so long after their warp trails have dissipated. Wed be happy to. Travis? Yes, sir. Lieutenant Travis Mayweather stepped forward from where he had stood behind Archer, waiting patiently to play his part. The handsome,

dark-skinned, bright-eyed officer gave Archer an easy smile and nod as he stepped up to the table, a reminder that the tensions that had arisen between the two men at the onset of the Romulan conflict were now decisively a thing of the past. Admiral Archer was still getting used to the sight of him in the new Federation Starfleet uniform. Although the various space agencies of the UFPs five founding members still existed and oversaw their own ships and specialties within the combined fleet they jointly administered, theyd agreed they should adopt a common uniform with elements reflecting all its member states. Mayweathers black undershirt sported a Vulcan-style Mandarin collar; over it was a V-necked tunic worn above a separate pair of black trousers and boots. Archers own command-division tunic was an avocado green not unlike the command color of the Andorian Guard, while Mayweathers operations-division tunic was reddish-brown per Tellarite military convention. The lieutenants rank insigniaa single gold stripe, as opposed to five alternating wide and narrow stripes for Archeradorned each of his cuffs and shoulder straps. The shoulders were set off by a shallow chevron of gold-fringed navy-blue piping extending from shoulder joints to mid-sternum, reflecting Vulcan designs from the twenty-first century. Below the piping, next to the vertical zipper of the left-hand tunic pocket, was the gold arrowhead insignia of the United Earth Space Probe Agency, the government department that administered Earths Starfleet. To balance it, the mission patch had moved to the right sleeve, with Mayweather and Archer both bearing the generic Starfleet Command patch, a circular blue field of stars behind a horizontal gold chevron, rather than a specific ships design. Mayweathers wide-ranging experience during the Romulan War had broadened his interests beyond piloting starships, and hed been a valuable advisor to Archer in this current assignment. I dont mean to contradict you, General, Mayweather began in his usual laid-back, conversational tone, but those warp trails havent completely dissipated. Theres still some ion residue out there. Disconnected traces, Major Glith said, already blended into the interstellar medium. Almost, but not quite. See, the thing about reconstructing ion trails is that you need to know what youre looking for. You searched for a lot of small trails, right? One for each cell ship? Thats correct, the stern-faced major replied. Well, we have reason to believe these cell ships arent capable of warp drive. They wouldve had to dock with the two motherships you detected in orbit. So youd be looking for two larger trails instead of a few dozen smaller ones. Glith pondered Mayweathers words for a moment, then turned to Valk. Its a plausible notion, General. If the sponsors who provided the Cabals advanced technology truly have been gone as long as we believe, then the Suliban would be unable to repair those micro-warp drives when they failed. They may have been forced to retrofit their larger vessels with standard drives and rely on the modular nature of the craft to cluster them together. She looked back at the Starfleet officers. But we did scan for the mother-ships traces as well and found nothing conclusive. Mayweather smiled. Thats where we can help you, Major. Theres a little trick we picked up a few years back in the Delphic Expanse. Helped us track down some Osaarian pirates whod destroyed an alien ship and then ransacked Enterprise. See, what you have to do is model the effect of the warp fields own gravimetric distortions on the ISMs density profile, then correlate that with the ion concentrations to compute the most probable trajectory. Weve already found their most likely course out of this system, which should put us on the right track. Valk was taken aback. If you already found that information, why havent you shared it with us? Well, we wouldve told you sooner, sir, but, well, you were talking and it wouldve been rude to interrupt. Archer suppressed a chuckle. From anyone else, the comment wouldve come across as snide. But Mayweathers natural good humor and openness softened the barb, getting the criticism across without provoking the generals ire. If Valk did take offense, it would be clear that his bluster, not Federation duplicity, would be the source of any further delays in tracking down the raiders. Still, General Valk was slow to let go of his suspicions. So you would have us follow you in pursuit of a trail you claim only you can find. How do we know you wont lead us into ambush? Youre welcome to join us aboard my flagship, General, Archer proposed. You can observe the entire operation yourself. And well share our sensor telemetry with your ships. Which have no means of verifying its accuracy without further analysis. But youll have plenty of time to analyze it later, Mayweather told him. If we did trick you to lead you into a trap, your people would have the proof, and that would look really bad for the Federation. So either were not your enemyor we are, but were a really stupid enemy. Either way, what have you got to lose? Valk made a show of discussing it with his officers, but Archer could tell Mayweather had sealed the deal. He gave the lieutenant a tiny nod and smile, earning a bigger smile in response. U.S.S. Endeavour NCC-06 Whatever flimsy filament of trust General Valk was willing to extend to Starfleet did not include trusting his bodily integrity to the transporter, a technology the Tandarans lacked. So Archer and Mayweather ferried him across by shuttlepodwhich Archer was glad of, always appreciating a chance to see the new pride of Starfleet

from the outside. Endeavour had been the sixth NX-class starship built by Earth, originally a twin to Archers beloved Enterprise. But that class had suffered badly in the Earth-Romulan Warproduction of the state-of-the-art ships had been suspended in favor of mass-producing older, simpler designs, leaving only a handful of NX-class ships in service, and most of those had been lost to Romulan weapons. Enterprise herself had survived, but with her spaceframe too compromised in the decisive Battle of Cheron ever to fly again; so she was now in honorable retirement at the Smithsonians orbital annex. Thus, Endeavour was now the last active survivor of the NX class. Yet she was also the first of a new breed of Federation starships. After the war, she had undergone a massive refit, the results of which were visible to the shuttlepods occupants as it drew nearer. From above, Endeavour looked much the same as it always had: a silver-skinned saucer with two large pontoons stretching back to connect to a pair of red-domed warp nacelles on upswept, winglike pylons.

Yet as the shuttlepod descended alongside the ship, her newest feature came into view: a cylindrical secondary hull with a deep rear undercut, positioned and sized to occupy the secondary node of the vessels warp field while in flight. The hull had been added to house the larger, more powerful warp reactor that allowed the ship to surpass warp factor six for finite periods of time, and also bore a large, circular navigational deflector dish on its prow to supplement the flattened oval of the saucer deflector. The new designwhich would be the template for more ships to followhad been redesignated the Columbia class at Archers insistence, in honor of the first NX ship to be lost, the vessel commanded by his dear friend Erika Hernandez until her disappearance in the first year of the Romulan War. At first, Archer had disliked the modifications, feeling Enterprise had been perfect the way she was. But the more he got used to the secondary hull, the more he felt it gave the design a balance it had been missing before. It still clashed a bit with the pontoons, but he imagined that future ship designs would integrate it more smoothly. The thick, squat dorsal connector that joined the two hulls had taken the place of the main shuttlebay, so the two drop bays for the shuttlepods had been relocated to either side of it. Yet Mayweather still piloted the pod into contact with the umbilical as deftly as he ever had, and soon they were safely aboard. As Archer debarked, Endeavours captain greeted him at the top of the ladder. Admiral, she said in her usual cool tones. Welcome back. Permission to come aboard, Captain TPol. Permission granted. She gave a tiny tilt to her head. It is, after all, your ship. He grinned, appreciating his former executive officers dry wit more than ever now that he saw her less frequently. Having Endeavour as his personal flagship meant they worked together fairly often, but still his duties forced him to spend much of his time Earthbound. TPol looked good in her green command tunic. She had taken to wearing her brown hair a few centimeters longer than in the past, which also flattered her. She wore the UESPA arrowhead on her breast rather than the circle-and-triangle IDIC patch of the Vulcan Space Council; after all, it was an Earth-administered ship she commanded, and she had been a member of Earth Starfleet for seven years before the services were combined. TPol was flanked by two guards, their slate-gray tunics a tribute to the former Military Assault Command Operations forces that had now been folded into Starfleets security division. The guards flanked General Valk unobtrusively as Archer, TPol, and Mayweather led him to the bridge. It had been less than an hour since Archer had stood on this bridge, but it still struck him how much it felt like old home week. Its layout was much the same as Enterprises bridge, with only minor upgrades to some of the controls and readouts; aside from the added hull, most of the improvements in the redesigned ship were under the proverbial hood. Archer knew there had been a project under way at Alpha Centauri to devise downgraded equipment that would be less vulnerable to Romulan telecapture weaponry; but with the Romulans no longer an issue, the project had been abandonedalthough a few folks at Starfleet Engineering had been taken with the minimalist aesthetics of the design and were talking about incorporating a similar look into future ships, despite their greater advancement underneath. But it wasnt the room that fired Archers nostalgia so much as the people. General Valk, he said to their guest, this is Commander Malcolm Reed, Endeavours first officer. The compactly built, brown-haired and trim-goateed Englishman looked crisp in his green tunic with twin commanders stripes and the Endeavour mission patch on the sleeve. He gave a stiff, proper nod to the Tandar general, but nevertheless watched him as closely as if hed still been Archers armory officer on Enterprise. And Lieutenant Commander Hoshi Sato, protocol officer and chief of communications. Gaval nek bor, Valk-Darak, the lovely, deceptively delicate-featured Japanese woman greeted the general in Tandar before extending an arm swathed in the cobalt blue of the science division. Ill be seeing to your needs while youre aboard, sir. Mer nalak, Valk thanked her, surprised at her courtesy. But my only need, he went on to Archer, is to find those Suliban raiders. You claim you can do sonow is the time to prove it. Certainly, Captain TPol said, settling smoothly into the command chair. Lieutenant Mayweather, if you would care to take the helm?

Travis beamed. It's been a while, ma'am. Perhaps you should think of it like riding a bicycle. That seems to be effective among humans. The lieutenant chuckled. Yes, Captain. Archer smiled to himself. Old home week, he reflected. Even Doctor Phlox was down in sickbay, waiting to confirm the raiders' identity. But then he grew somber, remembering those who were missing in particular, whose absence from the engineering console was still keenly felt. I guess you can't go home again after all. September 26, 2162. By the second day of the pursuit, it became evident that the raiders' vessels were en route to the Qhembembem Outpost, a disreputable trading post orbiting one component of a dim, unremarkable binary red dwarf system in unclaimed space. Many criminals, both private and organized, took advantage of the system's obscurity and isolation to engage in illicit transactions, including slave trading. This made it imperative to intercept the ships before they reached the outpost; otherwise the abducted Tandarans could be transferred to any of numerous vessels and become exponentially harder to track down. Fortunately, Endeavour's chief engineer, Michel Romaine, was one of the designers of the vessel's upgraded engine, and thus was able to apply his expertise to get the engines up to warp factor 6.3 and keep them there for over eight hours, enabling the vessel to close on the two Suliban carrier ships while still on the outskirts of the binary system. The Grentra was the Tandarans' fastest available ship, but though it could reach warp 6.5 for brief periods, it could not sustain such velocities for long without slowing to let its engines cool. The Grentra was thus lagging behind Endeavour but closing in at best speed as the carrier ships came into the Federation vessels' visual range. Captain TPol studied the ships carefully as Sato brought them into focus on the viewscreen. It was an illogical impulse, since surely the sensors could gather far more data than her eyes could; but it had been a long time since she had been able to suppress such impulses reliably. The Vulcan had learned instead, through careful training, to allow them, acknowledge them, and move on. She simply noted the distinctive modular design of the Suliban vessels. Each carrier had a lattice-like central spine on which the various cell ships were docked, extending perpendicularly outward from docking points at regular intervals, giving the ships a crosslike appearance from the rear. TPol recalled her only prior encounter with such a carrier vessel, during an incident a decade before involving the Tholians. There, all the ships attached to the spine had been of the larger, more elongated variety of cell ship, but these were more asymmetrically arranged, with some of the docking points empty, some occupied by the larger slab-shaped vessels, and the rest occupied by trains of three to four of the smaller, more symmetrical cell ships. The engine modules at the rear also appeared larger than those of that earlier carrier, reinforcing the idea that these raiders were using a cruder form of warp drive than the Cabal had employed. Closing to weapons range, Lieutenant Commander Takashi Kimura reported from the tactical station on TPol's right. The captain turned to the other side of the bridge, where Lieutenant Elizabeth Cutler sat at the science station. Scan for Tandarans' biosigns, TPol instructed her. Scanning, Cutler replied, brushing back her straight, honey-brown hair. They're jamming, it's hard to get a clear read... but I'm only getting indications consistent with Tandarans from the lead ship. Nothing in the trailing vessel. Then detaining that lead ship is our priority, TPol said. Leave that to us, General Valk demanded. Those children are our responsibility. They must not be harmed. I have no intention of allowing any harm to come to them, TPol assured him. This will be a precision operation. If they were your children, would you trust anyone else? I might have to, she told him evenly, if theirs were the only ship able to reach them in time. Before Valk could respond, Kimura called, Incoming fire! Hull plating, TPol ordered. Kimura barely had time to polarize the hull material, strengthening its molecular bonds, before the raiders' torpedo struck. The impact rocked the ship. Evasive, TPol instructed Mayweather at the helm. I thought we weren't in range, Admiral Archer said. Clever, TPol replied. They remembered that the lead ship in a warp pursuit has an advantage. I see, said General Valk. They let the torpedo drop to impulse behind them, using it as a mine. They won't have the advantage long, Reed announced. Indeed, it was only moments more before Endeavour was close enough to synchronize warp fields with the nearer ship and fire its phase cannons. Target their engines, TPol ordered as the deck jolted beneath her feet from the return fire. If they could force this ship to impulse, it would no longer pose a threat and they could concentrate on rescuing the captives aboard the lead ship. Unfortunately the trailing carrier proved too well armed and shielded for it to be that simple. Reed seized the handhold mounted atop the helm console to stabilize himself after a particle beam impact on the dorsal hull rocked the bridge severely. Captain, we need to engage deflectors! Agreed, TPol said. Lieutenant, activate forward deflector shields. She activated the comm channel to the engine room. Bridge to engineering. Adjust warp field to compensate for deflectors. They've taken damage to propulsion, Kimura announced. They're slowing. But so are we, Mayweather reported. I can't maintain more than warp three-point-two. Continue targeting propulsion and weapons, TPol instructed the tactical officer.

What is going on? Valk demanded. Why are you slowing down? TPol noted Archers grimace. He was reluctant to admit one of Starfleets tactical weaknesses. But TPol judged that holding on to the Tandarans tenuous trust in the here and now was more important. This is an Earth ship, but the deflector shield technology is of Andorian origin, she explained. There has been some difficulty in reconciling the two technologies. Valk laughed. Your shields interfere with your warp field! Only for the moment, Archer said through clenched teeth. We just need to work out a few bugs. The generals humor quickly passed. And while you contend with your bugs, the other ship is getting away! A temporary setback, Reed said confidently, even as Kimuras determined fire finally blew out the trailing carriers warp drive and forced it back into normal space, where it quickly receded behind them. Deactivate deflectors, TPol said. Mister Mayweather, resume maximum speed. Commander Sato, notify the Grentra of the carriers location. General, if you will instruct your personnel to take the crew prisoner, they will be able to verify Captain! Kimura cried. The trailing ship just exploded! Scanning, Cutler said, then shook her head. No survivors. Mister Kimura? TPol asked. I fired to disable, Captain. But I suppose I couldve miscalculated... There was no shock or remorse in his voice, only professional focus. Kimura was an experienced soldier, a former major in the MACOs, and had always been able to set his emotions aside when duty required. No, Sato said after a moment. The lead ship sent a burst transmission to the other one just before it exploded. I think it was a remote detonation signal. She shook her head with a curt sigh. They didnt even warn them first. Archers expression hardened. They murdered their own people to conceal their identity. We know theyre Suliban, Valk said, renewed suspicion in his voice. Perhaps its their new backers identity they wish to conceal, eh, Admiral? Has it occurred to you that the raiders mightve had a reason for leaving that recording for you to find? In any case, TPol stressed, we now know the lengths they will go to in order to avoid capture. Extreme care must be taken with the remaining ship. Unfortunately, by the time Endeavour caught up with the second carrier twenty-three minutes later, it was already beginning its descent toward the surface of the otherwise lifeless planet hosting the Qhembembem Outpost. Our options for preventing it from reaching the outposts defense perimeter in time are severely limited, Malcolm Reed observed. Once its inside, we wont be able to get to it, or scan through their jamming fields. Then we must prevent it from reaching the surface, TPol said. Mister Kimura, deploy the tractor beam. Kimura worked the controls that extended the graviton beams emitter array from the underside of the secondary hull. Ready, he said. Locked on. Engage. The false-color display on the viewscreen showed the beam appearing between Endeavour and the carrier ship. Yet instead of locking onto the ships center of mass, the beam went awry and only snagged a row of cell ships extending outward from the rear docking node. Moments later, the carrier jettisoned the cell ships and pulled free, its descent trajectory barely interrupted. Let me guess, Valk growled. The tractor beam is Tellarite. Vulcan, TPol corrected. Still, the generals basic premise was correct; as with the deflectors, it was proving difficult to integrate the technology effectively with the human ships systems in this case, the targeting sensors, which were susceptible to the gravimetric distortion induced by the beam. But Reed actually seemed pleased by the result. Captain, I have an idea. Go ahead. Elizabeth, can you isolate which pods the Tandan biosigns are in? Yes, Commander, Cutler replied. Theyre in the two large cell ships at twelve o'clock and nine o'clock in the second cluster from the front. Reed circled the tactical console and came up to Kimuras side. Takashi, do you think you can snag one with the tractor beam while I get the grapples on the other? I think I can compensate for the beam drift manually, sir. But we need to take their shields down first. Shouldnt be a problem, Reed told him, and they exchanged a quick look and a knowing nod. Working together, Kimura and Reed let loose three of the ships phase cannon beams against strategic points around the second docking node, and TPol observed the characteristic shimmer of failing shields. Moments later, the tractor beam brushed the front of one of the cells, then locked on more firmly as the ships forward momentum brought it more fully into contact. Seconds after that, the fullerene grappling lines snagged the other cell ship. The carrier strained against the pull for a few moments, then released both pods. Get them out of there! Archer ordered, and not a moment too soon. As Endeavour drew in both cells, the carrier began firing at them as it continued on toward the defense perimeter. Can you beam them out? Something in the hulls is still jamming our scans, Cutler said. We need to get them closer to force a beam through. Then do it! Valk bellowed. Fortunately, Endeavours refit had included the enlargement of the main transporter pad and the installation of a second unit, for both transporters were needed to beam off the occupants of both cell ships simultaneously, just before the carriers fire hit home and destroyed them. The carriers almost to the perimeter, Reed reported from tactical. Were too far to reach them in time. But a proximity alert sounded on the console. Its the Grentra, incoming, sir! Kimura reported. Moments later, plasma bolts began raining

down on the compromised carrier. Tell your people to take them alive, General! Archer said. We need to prove whos really behind this. Dont worry, Admiral, Valk said. Youll be given that chance. In moments, the carrier was neutralized and held in the Grentras own grapples. But the forward cell ship broke free and shot for the planet surface, and moments later the carrier exploded. Grentra, damage report! Valk demanded. Major Gliths voice reported that the Tandarans warship had sustained only minimal damage. But what about our proof? Travis Mayweather asked. That wont be a problem, Reed said, grinning. Security reports we beamed over a couple of the childrens abductors along with them. One was injured in the battle, the others been stunned after trying to start something with our people. Theyre on their way to sickbay now along with the children. Archer was already heading for the lift. General, will you join me? General Valks first concern on reaching sickbay was the well-being of the children, but Phlox assured him that they were all intact aside from some cuts and bruises, and of course the emotional trauma of their ordeal. Valk showed unexpected gentleness in speaking to the children and reassuring them they were safe and Archer had a greater understanding for the steel underneath his words when Valk demanded that they be taken to his ship immediately so they could be reunited with their own people. Phlox agreed there was no reason they couldnt be discharged, and Archer had them escorted to the transporters. That left the two captive raiders, both still sedated. One was currently on the main operating table in front of the imaging chamber, while the other was on one of the biobeds along the outer wall of the circular complex. Suliban, Valk said, observing their cantaloupe-skinned appearance. He gestured to their formfitting red jumpsuits. And those are Cabal uniforms. But appearances, as the humans say, can be deceiving, General, Phlox said with his usual good cheer, a wide smile splitting his chubby Denobulan features. He gestured to the large display screen above the imaging chamber, showing a tomographic view of the raiders anatomy. Although these individuals have managed to obscure their biosigns sufficiently to fool external scans, a more detailed analysis confirms that their internal organs are very far from the Suliban norm. One doesnt expect the Suliban norm from the Cabal, Doctor, the general replied, beginning to grow impatient. Ahh, Phlox said, his grin widening as he raised a scalpel. But does one expect this? Valk stiffened in surprise as Phlox drew the scalpel deftly and efficiently across the side of the raiders mottled face. Archer was a bit startled as well; his source, well-trained in the ways of secrecy, had not fully briefed him on what to expect. But as soon as it became evident that there was no blood emerging from the cut, he began to realize what he was about to see. Indeed, a moment later, Phlox pulled back the Suliban face to reveal a different alien face underneath humanoid in structure with a compact nose and thin lips, but covered in gray reptilian scales, with low, gently curving ridges of raised scales adorning the cheeks and forehead and forming crests above the eyes. What is that? Valk cried. A Malurian, General, the doctor replied, the showman in him relishing the reveal. The other is as well, and so, I daresay, were the rest. Malurians? They run one of the major criminal operations in known space, Archer told him. My crew and I first encountered them eleven years ago on a pre-warp planet, mining veridium for black-market munitions. Their operation was poisoning thousands of the native people, the Akaali, until we put a stop to it. Archer remembered the Malurians leader, a man calling himself Garos. He had been a real piece of work, with the personality of a used-car salesman and the ruthlessness of a Romulan, contending with shocking casualness that a few thousand Akaali wouldnt be missed. Archer had always regretted being unable to do more than send him into retreat, free to wreak havoc somewhere else. Other Starfleet ships have encountered them a few times in the years since. Theyre masters of disguise and deception. Their dermal camouflage is quite ingenious, Phlox said. It stretches, respirates, perspires, even heals and grows hair, if necessary, just like the real thing. It can be worn for weeks without needing repair or replacement, barring accident. And it can even mask the Malurian biosigns within. When you analyze the captured cell ships, Archer added, youll probably find theyre fakes too, which is why they didnt have warp drive on their own. But why did they attack our colony? Valk pressed. And why in Suliban disguise? Archer faced him. To provoke exactly the reaction you had, General. To try to trigger a war between Tandar and the Federation. See, when the major spacegoing powers band together to promote peace, law and order, thats not a good thing for the criminal element. They want to nip the Federation in the bud before it gets too strong or at least keep us so busy fighting our neighbors that we wont be able to focus on them. Hm. Valk contemplated for a moment. From what Ive seen, they neednt have bothered. General? The massive Tandarans chuckled. You and your allies cant even get your equipment to work together effectively. I saw how it worried you that I discovered that. But you neednt be concerned. You pose no threat to anyone, least of all Tandar. So we will have no quarrel with you as long as you continue to stay out of our business. He smirked. Hmp. I daresay youve got enough problems of your own to deal with. Qhembembem Outpost

Dular Garos knew better than to try to fight the well-muscled giants who had waylaid him shortly after he'd landed his ersatz cell ship, before he'd even managed to get back to the Malurian compound. He simply let them escort him to meet with their master, knowing his best chance of survival was to play along. He generally preferred more subtle means of dealing with a crisis than open confrontation. He didn't even resist when they unceremoniously ripped off his Suliban disguise, even though it stung as the adhesive pulled on his scales, and even though it had been a very expensive and meticulously designed piece of work. He was a bit surprised, though, when the massive retainers plopped him down in front of a subspace transceiver. He'd expected to be brought before the local master of this particular syndicate, but evidently he'd drawn attention from someplace higher up and someone too prominent to be caught anywhere near this cesspool. Mister Garos, purred the woman who appeared on the screen, evidently quite a striking humanoid female, judging from the seductive way she presented herself, though she was far from his type. You promised us some juicy young slaves. I expected to have a consignment for auction to the highest bidder, Garos replied, matching her faux-amiable tone and the steel hidden underneath. You were welcome to participate, but I made your people no promises. It's not the first time you've failed to deliver the goods, though. You do have the worst luck when Starfleet gets involved. Garos wished he were still masked; it would have made it easier to conceal the impact her words inflicted on him. He had been rising in influence in his alignment until that upstart human captain, Archer, had exposed and scuttled his veridium-mining operation, earning him exile for his failure. Until he redeemed himself, he would never see his ancestral mating ground again. And was it really necessary to kill so many of your own people? the woman asked, sounding more amused than shocked. I doubt your alignment will think very highly of that. It was necessary if we were to convince the Tandarans that the Federation was backing their enemies. He hadn't enjoyed killing so many useful underlings, many of whom had been highly competent. Some had been quite pleasant company as well. But the good of Maluria would always come first. Except that didn't actually, well, work, did it? Instead you've just proven to two of the regions powers that they have a common enemy, and probably driven them closer together in the process. Now, why does that sound so familiar? she asked, idly twirling her long hair with a finger. Oh, yes. That's just what happened when the Romulans tried to do the same thing. Rather than provoking a war between the Vulcans, Andorians, and the rest, they provoked an unprecedented alliance and the result was that troublesome Federation. Is that the only reason you brought me here? Garos asked. To critique my lack of originality? Far more than that, my dear Garos. You have the right idea; this Federation experiment could become a real threat to our free enterprise if it succeeds, so it's in our best interests to smother it in the crib. But dividing to conquer has been tried, and has failed. Then what do you propose as an alternative? That we follow the Federation's own example and embrace the strength that comes from partnership, the woman replied, a cunning grin on her delicate face. If they want to ally with their neighbors against a common enemy, why, let's give them one but one that suits our purposes. For the same drive to unite that created the Federation... also contains the seeds of its destruction.

Présentation de l'auteur
An original novel set in the universe of Star Trek: Enterprise! A new nation has arisen from the ashes of the Romulan War: the United Federation of Planets, an unprecedented union of diverse species cooperating for the good of all. Admiral Jonathan Archer, the former captain of the Earth starship Enterprise, whose efforts made this union possible, envisions a vibrant Federation promoting galactic peace and a multispecies Starfleet dedicated to exploring strange new worlds. Archer's former crewmates, including Captain T'Pol of the U.S.S. Endeavour and Captain Malcolm Reed of the U.S.S. Pioneer, work with him to secure that bright future. Yet others within the Federation see its purpose as chiefly military, a united defense against a dangerous galaxy, while some of its neighbors view that military might with suspicion and fear. And getting the member nations, their space fleets, and even their technologies to work together as a unified whole is an ongoing challenge. When a new threat emerges from a force so alien and hostile that negotiation seems impossible, a group of unaligned worlds asks Starfleet to come to its defense, and the Federation's leaders seize the opportunity to build their reputation as an interstellar power. But Archer fears the conflict is building toward an unnecessary war, potentially taking the young nation down a path it was never meant to follow. Archer and his allies strive to find a better solution...but old foes are working secretly to sabotage their efforts and ensure that the great experiment called the Federation comes to a quick and bloody end.

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