

# **Trouble on Artesia**

**A Star Trek Fan Fiction starring members of the USS Artesia**

**Story by Lieutenant Steve Morgenthaler**

An inmate in a San Francisco prison was surprised he had a visitor, and was curious who would visit him after what he had done. Larbird, a scientist who had once used Steven Morgenthauer's head as an experiment to build a multi-species monster, was led into an isolated cubical room. A prison guard left the room, the door shifting closed behind him.

Sitting at a square, metal table, was a young man, about 30 years old. He looked expectantly at Larbird and smiled. "Good evening, Doctor. They say that you're a mad man, but I think you're brilliant." Larbird raised an eyebrow out of curiosity.

"Go on, young man," Larbird quietly retorted. "What is it that you need?"

"How did you build it?"

"Build what?"

"The creature." The young man held up a small, thin, rectangular device that had a series of red and green blinking lights. "Don't worry. I shut off all communications that lead in and out of this room. I will make it worth your while. Trust me."

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*Lieutenant's Log: Ensign Jared Smith has talked me into boarding the Holodeck to act out a late scene in Brian O'Neal's mystery novel, "Trouble on Qo'noS" in which a fictional Klingon was convicted of murder in the 22nd century. Meanwhile, the USS Artesia is escorting an O'Neal descendent, Jimmy O'Neal to Qo'noS to celebrate the lifting of a 200-plus year ban on the O'Neal family and Brian O'Neal's novels, despite the intergalactic literary awards "Trouble on Qo'noS" received.*

*O'Neal's novels starred Osborne Oates, a 55 year-old man who had a talent for solving mysteries and sported streaked white and black hair who wore a large, brown overcoat, a vest, a collared shirt, a pair of blue jeans, black running shoes, and a pipe he rarely smoked. His look was sort of cowboy meets Holmes meets Columbo meets athlete. . . . .*

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Lieutenant Steven Morgenthaler and Ensign Jared Smith entered one of the caves on this Holodeck version of Qo'noS. Morgenthaler, dressed in a mid-22nd century Starfleet uniform, responded to his friend's curious look. "Surprised I agreed to be your prisoner?"

"Dude, after our last Holodeck adventure? Yeah. . . . Like my Klingon costume?"

"It's cool, but you still have your natural half-Denobulan face."

"It's all good, Stevie," Smith, beaming while rubbing his hands together, retorted, "You as my prisoner. I think I'm gonna like this!"

Smith then aggressively grabbed Morgenthaler's left arm and forced him further into the cave system. Morgenthaler grimaced at Smith's hold and gave his friend a "We're just acting!" look. Smith shrugged off his friend's critique and shoved him into a small room. Smith pushed a series of buttons on a nearby control panel, which caused a door to careen closed behind Smith, locking both men inside. On the floor to Morgenthaler's left sat a middle-aged man, sporting an overcoat, jeans, tennis shoes, and an unlit pipe.

"Thank you for bringing the officer in, Kaplut," said Oates as he stood up. "This Vulcan has died tonight, right here in this room." Oates pointed to a young Vulcan with a bloodied face and broken jaw, lying on the ground. "Further examinations of his wounds show that this Vulcan was murdered after a physical struggle. . . . He was a guest?"

"Yes," Kaplut snarled. "An unwanted guest!"

"A guest, you say?" Morgenthaler's character disagreed. "Like you Kingons are ever peaceful!"

"The bickering between Starfleet and Klingons is tiring," Oates concluded. . . . "The wounds to his shoulder and abdomen are reminiscent of phase pistol fire from *Enterprise* members."

“See? I knew it was you, Commander!” Kaplut snarled. “Humans always try to pin things on Klingons!”

“More bickering,” Oates interrupted, shaking his head. “The markings on his face indicate Klingons. Humans can also break jaws, but a Klingon fingernail was found in his teeth. And you, sir, are missing a nail, are you not?”

“That means nothing!” Kaplut yelled. “If I broke his face, as you claim, that is not proof that I killed this Vulcan!” Kaplut pointed at the Starfleet commander. “*His* phase pistol did the damage!”

“Yes, indeed, a phase pistol did kill the Vulcan,” Oates agreed. “Analysis of the prints indicate a Klingon fired the pistol, but it was your brother, not you.”

“My brother has been missing for weeks!” Kaplut bellowed as Oates fiddled with something in his pocket. “He couldn’t have —”

The Holodeck scene was interrupted by intense shaking, as if the *Artesia* had been experiencing another anomaly or wormhole. Suddenly, they were beamed out of the Holodeck and onto the bridge of the ship. Strangely, Oates was beamed onto the bridge with them. The entire bridge crew was mysteriously asleep.

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The *USS Artesia* was adrift in space, with only emergency lighting, transporters, automatic doors, air, gravity, and the Holodecks apparently working. Furthermore, scans determined only Morgenthaler, Smith, and two others were awake.

Morgenthaler wondered why they had been beamed out of the Holodeck and why so few were spared from being put to sleep. Stranger still was that computer generated Osborne Oates seemed to be alive and well, aboard the bridge.

Oates looked around the bridge, astonished at what he was witnessing. “Incredible!” Oates exclaimed. “It appears that the grand experiment of space travel and meeting aliens has succeeded.” Oates looked at Morgenthaler. “A human.” Then, he looked at Jared, “And a, uhhh”

“Denobulan,” Jared answered.

“Denobulan?”

“Well,” Jared corrected himself. “Half-Denobulan. Half-human.” Jared took off his Klingon costume to reveal his Starfleet uniform underneath. Morgenthaler did the same with his *Enterprise NX-01* costume.

“Oh, yes. Denobulan. *Enterprise* had a doctor Denobulan, I think. . . . What year is this?”

“Let’s just say,” Morgenthaler answered, “It’s about 200 years after the O’Neal novel that you were created from. How you survive outside the Holodeck beats me. . . . You solved some mysteries in O’Neal’s novels. It appears that we are involved in some.”

“Yes,” Oates agreed. “How am I here? Why is everyone asleep? Why is your ship not moving? Why is that man over there *dead?*”

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The man, dressed in civilian attire, was in a seated position, with the right side of his face and neck firmly jammed into monitors at the back of the bridge. “This man is Jimmy O’Neal,” Morgenthaler immediately recognized. Morgenthaler felt no pulse on Jimmy’s neck, confirming his death.

“None of us appear to be the culprit,” Oates concluded, distracting Morgenthaler and Smith from the corpse. Oates took a panoramic view of the bridge and pointed out all those who were asleep – Admiral Morgenthaler, Helmsman Saltzman, Captain Powers, and three others on the bridge. “Anyone here or elsewhere on the ship could have done this, and covered their tracks by putting themselves to sleep. . . .” Oates stopped himself in midthought and took a closer look at the left side of O’Neal’s neck. “What are these stitches doing here?”

“He said he cut himself with a knife,,” Morgenthaler recalled. “Told me about it last night.”

“What was he doing?” Oates asked.

“Cutting potatoes.”

Smith belly-laughed. “Sure it wasn’t you, Stevie, you klutz!?”

Oates rubbed his chin in deep thought while he took notes in a small spiral notebook while whispering out-loud. “Neck stitches, potatoes, klutz.”

Morgenthaler glared at Oates. “What are you saying, Detective!? Implying that I had something to do with O’Neal’s death? I wasn’t even here!”

“Neither was I,” Oates admitted. “But wasn’t your son in a fight with a Klingon once? Didn’t that young Klingon threaten your son?”

“That was a long time ago!” Morgenthaler yelled. “They were just kids! And how do you know any of this?”

“I am computer-generated,” Oates calmly stated. “I have records of a Holodeck program, the one in which your friend, Jared, put into a different simulation. The history of you and your son. You could have an internal grudge against Klingons. And not want the ban lifted.”

Morgenthaler’s glare suddenly softened at Oates’ final sentence.

“Or maybe not. It’s just a theory, Lieutenant.”

Smith slipped Morgenthaler a card that read, “Only the novel is programmed in, nothing else. No joke.” Morgenthaler slipped the note into his pocket.

Then, Oates picked up a sharp kitchen knife that was lying on the floor next to O'Neal's feet. "What is this?" Oates asked. The knife's blade had remnants of potato skins and an engraving that read, "To the best of friends, Mr. Steven Morgenthaler."

"This could be something," Oates theorized as he noted this finding. "Or it could be someone trying to frame the Lieutenant." Morgenthaler rolled his eyes at Oates. "Maybe even Smith. We should check the kitchens."

At that, the three of them left the bridge.

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A soft chime rang near the sliding door that separated his quarters from the adjacent hallway. "Enter," Morgenthaler said softly. K'larf, a rather muscular Klingon, who had recently made some peace with Morgenthaler some 13 years after an elementary school skirmish between Morgenthaler's son, Earvin and K'larf's son, Beltrak, entered. **Very soon afterward, Morgenthaler saved Earvin from some sort of vengeance attempt by K'larf and Beltrak.** Morgenthaler stood up, hand instinctively on his phaser before relaxing his hand to nervously shake K'larf's hand.

"So, you haven't been put to sleep, K'larf?" Morgenthaler asked.

"No," K'larf answered. "I was in one of your Holodecks, in a Klingon fighting ritual. It was great for a warrior!" K'larf gave Morgenthaler a half-smile, half-snarl.

"Is this the Klingon you have had arguments with, Lieutenant?" asked Oates.

"Who is this?" K'larf aggressively asked. "You look like one of those idiot Earthlings who like to play dress-up from human books."

Oates held out his hand. "Hello. I am Osborne Oates."

“Oates?” K’larf questioned. “You mean from the stupid books that my world is now accepting? What a joke! Humans thinking Klingons are murderers?! We are WARRIORS! Those books, and that family, should still be banned!”

Oates once again took notes while whispering, “Stupid books. Joke. Warriors. Books and family should still be banned.”

K’larf gave Morgenthaler a curious look. “What is he doing?”

“Jimmy O’Neal is dead,” Morgenthaler admitted. “He thinks he is investigating O’Neal’s death, like he does in Brian O’Neal’s mysteries. This man is from a Holodeck program and is somehow able to live among us here.”

“In case anyone was wondering,” Smith awkwardly interrupted as he entered Morgenthaler’s quarters. “I finished scanning the kitchens. Everything’s clean.”

K’larf snarled menacingly at Oates. “And you think that I had something to do with his death? Klingons are WARRIORS, not murderers! This is INSULTING!”

“Why are you here, if I may ask?” calmly questioned Oates.

“Morgenthaler and I have made peace after years of hatred and misunderstanding,” K’larf answered. “Starfleet and Klingon Command think that having the two of us at the ceremony would show comparison to the ban being lifted.”

“And you think it should not be lifted?” Oates asked.

“Did you not understand me!?” K’larf bellowed. “No, it should NOT be lifted! The book is insulting to all Klingons!” Oates continued writing notes in his notebook. Suddenly, K’larf slapped the notebook onto the floor. “You idiot! I had nothing to do with O’Neal’s death! Go back to the megabytes you



came from!" . . . K'larf then addressed Morgenthaler. "I will be in my quarters if you need me." K'larf stormed out of sight.

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It appeared that circumstantial evidence and K'larf's hatred for Brian O'Neal's novels was pointing to the possibility of K'larf being Jimmy O'Neal's killer. In addition, K'larf had a history of disdain toward Morgenthaler and his son, Earvin, though the Morgenthalers and K'larf's family had made some peace among themselves. Morgenthaler's initial nervous reaction to K'larf entering his quarters displayed some evidence toward some lingering resentment between Morgenthaler and K'larf, but none of this was enough to confirm who or what killed Jimmy O'Neal.

Morgenthaler's kitchen knife found near O'Neal's feet, the stitches in O'Neal's neck, and Morgenthaler being a klutz around kitchen utensils were not enough evidence to implicate Morgenthaler, Smith, or anyone else.

Yet, more mysteries were involved. What caused the USS *Artesia* to shake so vigorously before the discovery of O'Neal's dead body? What put *Artesia*'s crew to sleep? Why were only emergency lighting, doors, elevators, and transporters among the very few things that worked aboard ship? Was any of this connected or purely coincidental? All investigating these mysteries hoped something would come to light, and that they were not personally found guilty of any of this.

With no livable planets close enough to beam to and all shuttlecraft onboard not working, Morgenthaler, the highest ranking person who was actually awake, called all to the bridge. There, all agreed with Morgenthaler that they should, together, examine O'Neal's body and wounds further, to see if they can find any other evidence of what happened.

The first look was at the stitches on O'Neal's neck, which appeared to be stitched well. Smith took gloved hands to forcefully pull O'Neal's head and neck out of the monitors, forcing pieces of the monitors to fly to the floor. What was revealed on the right side of O'Neal's neck were not stitches, but large *staples*, with skin wrinkled, bunched up, and bubbled around the staples.

"Well," Smith mused, "This is no knife accident."

“Yeah,” Morgenthaler answered, recalling back to when a mad scientist used Morgenthaler’s head to build a multi-species being. “This guy looks like he was *put together*.”

“Put together?” K’larf curiously asked.

“Yes. This is not Jimmy O’Neal,” Morgenthaler responded as a drop of green blood fell harmlessly from beneath a staple to the floor.

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“So,” Morgenthaler began to theorize a few minutes later. “What if something was let out into the air that put the crew to sleep?”

“I thought of that,” Smith answered, nodding his head toward Oates. “If that were the case, wouldn’t we be put to sleep as well?”

Oates was strangely quiet, staring at his notebook.

“What if the effects wane over time?” K’larf theorized as he took a bite of an Earthling hot dog. K’larf grimaced and bellowed, “How do you humans eat this filth!?” K’larf suddenly held his stomach and grimaced in pain. “Arrrg!”

“Our food that bad, K’larf?” Morgenthaler teased.

“I suddenly feel sick. In pain.” At that, K’larf fell to the floor, and began to snore.

“That’s it!” Morgenthaler yelled. “Someone must have put something in our food replicators! And must have done so recently. But who? And why?”

Suddenly, the staples holding the right side of O’Neal’s neck together came apart, and then the skin below where the staples had just been peeled downward. This revealed a metallic neck with green liquid that was about the correct thickness to masquerade as Vulcan blood, oozing out of the bolts

and seams in the metal. Morgenthaler picked up the knife, cut through the rest of the neck skin, and peeled off the entire head off of the being. What was revealed was an android head and neck that was attached to a human body.

Morgenthaler, K'larf, and Smith stared at each other in shock and disbelief. They all turned to get Oates's opinion only to find that Oates was no longer there.

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On Morgenthaler's hunch, he and Smith entered the Holodeck program they had been in earlier in the day. They walked through the same caves and into the same room they had been in earlier. There, they found Osborne Oates, gagged and tied to a pillar on the east side of the room. Upon untying Oates, the detective gleefully stated, "Ahhhh, a half Denobulan! And a human! Thank you for releasing me."

"You're never getting out of here!" commanded a man who looked exactly like Oates as he entered the room. This Oates threw a rope to Smith. "Tie the lieutenant and Oates to that pillar, Ensign. My family will never make peace with those Klingons. K'larf is right. Our books should not be read by those animals! . . . . Well, TIE THEM UP!"

"Delay that order, Ensign," commanded an authoritative voice as he entered the room. There stood Admiral Phil Morgenthaler, his phaser pointing at the person imitating Oates. "Put your phaser down." The Oates imitator did just that as the admiral placed binding cuffs on him. "How did you do it?"

"I programmed **sleeping agents** into the replicators. Nontoxic, but **they do** cause some stomach pain. I built someone who looks like Jimmy O'Neal from left-over Android parts that I stole. The only blood I could find was Vulcan. I thought **the human sleeping agent** would last longer."

"Didn't you realize that we would have found that an Android head was not Jimmy O'Neal?" Lieutenant Morgenthaler asked.

“Didn’t think about that,” the imitator Oates said quietly.

“Artesia is running again,” the admiral stated. “We should have the damaged monitors repaired in a couple of hours. I assume you waited for us to be asleep before abruptly stopping the ship, which made your creation crash into our monitors.”

“Yes,” the imitator conceded while he took out a rectangular device that sported green and red blinking lights. “This device did the trick.” Smith then tossed the device to the admiral and slowly peeled a mask off of the man's face, revealing the real Jimmy O’Neal.

“And I would’ve gotten away with it, too . . . . .”

“If it wasn’t for us meddling officers!” Morgenthaler said, winking at Smith.

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Three days later, Morgenthaler and K’larf stood with politicians from Starfleet and Klingon Command as the ceremony lifting the ban of the O’Neal novels and family concluded. In turn, Starfleet accepted “Trouble on Artesia”, a novel written by popular Qo’noS author, Wastag Gremon.

After the ceremony, Morgenthaler asked Gremon what his book is about. “Murder on Earth!” Gremon exclaimed.

“Who’s the killer?”

“Not Klingon!”

“Touche,” Morgenthaler answered as he and the Klingon shared a laugh. From a short distance away, K’larf reluctantly smiled.

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A few weeks later, Larbird saw a cuffed Jimmy O’Neal escorted by his cell. “Was it worth my while?” Larbird asked to which O’Neal smirked. Suddenly, both of them dematerialized.

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**“They are aboard, Captain,” a Vulcan announced.**

**“Excellent, Commander,” the captain responded. “Bring Doctor Larbird here. And set course for Earth. Hail the Vulcan Empire!”**