



FORCE OF LAW

by Dale L. Kemper

The Court of Discipline was dimly lit as the four Klingon judges walked sternly through the massed assembly, all standing rigidly at attention. As they stepped onto the raised command console, the gong behind the platform sounded, signifying that the midday's recess was over. With the firm air of rigid authority, the senior judge took his seat, allowing the others in the Courtroom to resume theirs.

After slowly scanning the crowd, the senior judge looked down at his command screen. All was as it should be, no one absent or extra in the Court. With an imperceptible nod, the judge signalled to the guards that all was normal. Finally he spoke.

"We are ready to pass judgement on the accused, Kyn tai Tvor. Stand and hear the word of your fate."

All eyes turned to the restraint booth near the far wall. Inside was a small Imperial Klingon, probably 14 years of age. He wore the uniform of the Imperial Klingon Star Academy, his insignia showing him to be a second year cadet. But there was something that set him apart from the rest of the Klingons in the room. It was hard to place at first, perhaps something as subtle as an unusual glint in his eyes. It soon became apparent that Kyn tai Tvor's uniqueness was a demeanor showing complete disdain for authority. He slouched in his chair within the restraint booth and with half-closed eyes glared at the Court. As he rose to hear the verdict, nothing changed much except that he appeared even more defiant. Such appearances were unheard of within the personnel of the Imperial Klingon Star Academy. There had been some cases of delinquency among some of the lower-born Klingons being trained as laborers or the like, but these were usually dullards who soon had the reverence for authority beaten into them. Here was a different case entirely. Kyn tai Tvor was supposed to be a member of an elite group of Klingon youngsters who would someday be part of that great Imperial authority that controlled the Empire. How the defiant attitude that brought him to the present situation ever got passed the mind scanners was something that someone in Personnel Selection would have to answer for.

The young cadet's aberrant tendencies hadn't really been noticed until after he had been accepted into the Academy, and then it was thought to be an unimportant fluke in his makeup that might even give him more decisiveness than the average Klingon possessed. That this decisiveness was to prove to be a negative factor was soon apparent.

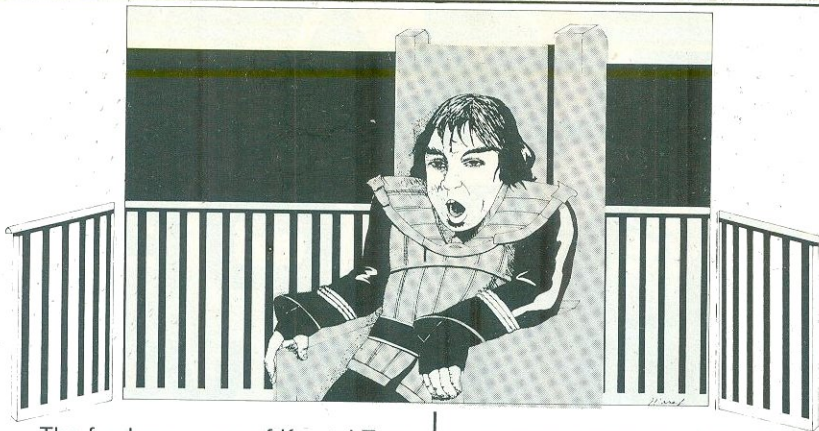
It began at the end of the first week that Kyn tai Tvor and his classmates were billeted in the Academy Barracks. The first four weeks of Academy life were used for indoctrination, during which the upperclassmen (usually those in their second or third years) were in charge of the new cadets, telling them exactly how things were run and painfully teach-

ing them the realities of underclass life. This was designed as the final test before total acceptance was obtained into the Academy. Even after the rigorous screening received by all Klingon youths, this final hurdle forced many cadets back to the mundane world of service schools and drudgery for life, most with physical or mental scars that would never go away. It was not unusual for the Academy Commandant to figure to lose up to a third of an incoming class during indoctrination.

Kyn tai Tvor went through the grueling orientation to academy life like all the rest of his classmates. But there was some difference, as if he had the resilience to withstand the punishing treatment from the upperclassmen and at the same time the determination to pay back those causing him hardship.

The first in a series of Tvor exploits occurred in the barracks latrine. As was the case during every day of indoctrination, each lowerclassman had to ask permission from at least two of the upperclassmen to use the facilities, after which he was given grudging approval to use the head and then had to clean up whatever area he had been in. This activity was, of course, timed by the upperclassmen, and the cadet who took the longest in the head that day was beaten severely and forced to pull all night guard duty in the same barracks latrine he was accused of "dawdling" in. Tvor had been selected by two of the nastiest upperclass cadets for special abuse because of, as they put it, "Tvor's haughty attitude and shifty eyes". These two cadets particularly gave Tvor trouble in his necessary trips to the head. For a series of three days, he had the longest time in the latrine and was beaten for it, as well as not permitted to sleep. His slowness in the latrine was not his doing, however, but rather because his two tormentors continually tripped him or forced him to reclean his area. Finally, on the fourth day everyone figured Tvor would be forced to leave the Academy. But his ordeal didn't continue. It seems that the two abusive upperclassmen had somehow received two broken legs apiece when the commodes they were using in their latrine suddenly exploded. When word of this got around, Tvor's name was mentioned, but there was nothing to show that he had had anything to do with the incident except the twinkle in his eyes.

Things got perceptibly better for Tvor after that. Tvor succeeded in withstanding the pressures of the rest of the indoctrination period and was given permanent assignment to the Academy. Word of the interesting turn of events during indoctrination came to the ears of his instructors, but they looked on it as a sign of decisiveness and thought better of Tvor for the rumor going around that he was the one who put the upperclassmen out of action. But soon their opinion changed.



The freshman year of Kyn tai Tvor was a year of great turmoil within the Academy. Not since the cadet support of the Imperial usurper Kuth the Merciless was this institution such a hotbed of mistrust, suspicion, and intrigue. Tvor was the main reason for this.

After the first incident, there was relative calm for a number of weeks. But this was not to last, as another situation involving Tvor arose, one far more serious than the first. During the first year at the Imperial Klingon Star Academy, a cadet is given most of his instruction in Klingon Law and History. This is designed to instill in him the understanding of the past necessary for continued achievement in the future, and to insure that every cadet has that proper amount of respect and dedication to Klingon ways and policies that are necessary to effectively serve the Empire. This instruction was actually only the final lesson that Klingons are forced to learn from birth onward. Thus was ingrained the desire for competition and superiority that meant so much in the playing of the *Komerex Zha* (Klingon for "the Perpetual Game"), the socially-acceptable practice of taking advantage of others while plotting to better your own position, politically or professionally. There are certain standard rules which everyone accepts as constants, but to know these rules, you must first play the game. Tvor began to play at an earlier age than most. But he seemed to design his own rules as he went along, a valid tactic in some situations, but not in his.

The Klingon Law class at the Star Academy is simply an exercise in the Klingon version of common sense. For instance, what do you do if one of your companions singlehandedly uncovers a revolt of servitors but is wounded trying to take the ringleaders alone? Written Klingon Law would say to help your comrade and then report the situation to your superiors. Actual Klingon Law and the *Komerex Zha* would dictate that you finish off your comrade, claim he

was part of the revolt himself, and take all the credit for uncovering the plot. In other words, unspoken Klingon Law is actually composed of only two parts: Do anything to better your position, and, Don't get caught.

Tvor was the first cadet to actually try to argue with his Law Instructor that these precepts were not the entire truth. He maintained that the law did not have to deal in what he considered absolutes. There were some hazy areas around all of these ideas. There were some instances when meaningless violence could occur with no motive, and, at the same time, followers of another could actually do good things for their leader and still better their position. Whether these were valid statements or just givens that didn't have to be mentioned was not considered when Tvor uttered them in class. The fact that he chose to speak up shocked his superiors and was grounds to have him dismissed from the Academy. But they relented and decided only to have him thrown in the barrack's Agonizer Booth for an hour a day for four weeks.

For some reason, it was a shock to everyone when the Academy's Law Instructor was electrocuted while supervising the overhaul of the Legal Department's Computer. Tvor just smiled as he walked to the barrack's detention center for his punishment.

It didn't take long for the other cadets to suspect who might have had a hand in the "accidental" death of their late Law Class Instructor. The style had an aura of experience about it, but most of the cadets were learning that Tvor didn't care for the treatment some of his superiors gave him and all assumed he was responsible. Kyn tai Tvor soon was looked upon as a prodigy of execution with abilities far in excess of his years. As was the Klingon cadet's code of honor this information went no further than the barracks, except when some cadet felt it would better his position.

It seems that a close line brother of

the dead instructor was also stationed at the Academy in the Weapons Training Section. He was finally told by a cadet of the general suspicion that Tvor had done the dirty deed. This was enough to put the grieving line brother on his trail.

In conjunction with the cadet informant, the weapons officer set up what he thought was a well-planned "accidental" death for Tvor. During weapons training, every Klingon cadet must learn the rudiments of disruptor side arms by field stripping and reassembling the weapon within a set time period. The weapons officer set Tvor's sonic discharge focusing unit within his pistol to a closed band, which would lead to a radical discharge of the weapon's power clip, killing the user. Since all weapons were checked before cadet use, he had to introduce the defective focusing unit into Tvor's weapon while the field stripping procedure was being conducted. For this, he used his informant cadet who was guaranteed a good grade for his help. This cadet was supposed to carelessly spill his broken-down disruptor into Tvor's work area. This rather unwieldy plan was carried out, but for some reason, during the weapons test firing procedure conducted after the disruptors were again in one piece, the defective focusing unit was found to be in the informant's weapon with which he promptly blew himself to bits.

This failure was too much for the weapons officer, who decided to have it out with Kyn tai Tvor right then and there. As cadets and instructors alike were picking themselves off the ground after the disruptor explosion the weapons officer began to fire wildly into the milling group of students, vainly trying to get a bead on Tvor. Several cadets were hit before they proved to the weapons officer once and for all the excellent quality of the training he had given them by getting him before he got the rest of them while trying to get to Tvor.

It was at this point that what had been happening within the freshman class finally got to the commander of the Klingon Star Academy. When Tvor was called into the Commandant's quarters (a rare occurrence for a lowly first year cadet), he naturally denied knowing anything about the past incidents. With the usual knowing smile that passes for Klingon manners, the Commandant said, "I don't care if you are telling the truth or not, Tvor, but I refuse to have my establishment racked with underclass warfare. This reflects on my performance as Commandant

and that I will not permit! You may be ahead of your time for a first year student, but remember, you don't have the backing or organization that other, more senior officers have developed over the years. Just one more bout of these activities and I warn you, there will be no place for you to hide. Dismissed."

Tvor left the Commandant's presence with his usual aura of defiance, and this didn't go unnoticed. In fact, word was going around that he was getting too cocky for his own good.

First year graduation was coming up, finally turning attention away from Tvor and the uproar he had caused and toward the examination the cadets would all have to pass. First year exams were always the toughest, with testing in all studied areas from Astrophysics to Zero-G Operations. Following exams, selected cadets would be given the added responsibility of indoctrinating the new first year class. This added another burden on the already hard-pressed cadets entering their second year, but it was a burden that most of them relished since they fully intended to give the same treatment (or worse) that they had received to the entering cadets.

Thus began the final chapter in the saga of Kyn tai Tvor. Because of his higher-than-average grades, he was one of the chosen second year cadets to be given a section of entering freshmen. The cruel mistreatment of these students was a long-standing tradition at the Imperial Klingon Star Academy. It was something every cadet had to go through. All but Tvor's cadets. Instead of the usual meaningless punishments for nothing and the well-tested baiting and abuse heaped on the entering cadets since the Academy's beginning, Tvor patiently and in a very un-Klingon manner actually helped his section understand the ins and outs of academy life without harsh treatment. Why he rocked the boat in this way is hard to understand. Perhaps he assumed his cadets would be grateful for the unharmed treatment and change their loyalty to him, thus beginning his organization for power. Indeed, many of his cadets did that very thing. But always in Klingon society there are those who will mistrust any activity of others and still just go for themselves. After Tvor's other second year classmates realized what he was doing (or rather, what he was not doing), there was an outcry far out of proportion to Tvor's activity. It was soon apparent that the easy-going treatment that Tvor was giving his cadets was turning the rest of the class against them. Several



beatings where Tvor's cadets were outnumbered 10 to 1 occurred, and finally Tvor decided to act. With precision and thoroughness, he went about training his cadets in his version of the art of assassination: academy style. In the span of five minutes, it was planned that no less than 12 upperclassmen who had been the most vocal against Tvor's group would be killed or incapacitated in various creative ways. If this kind of overkill policy was supposed to keep the other cadets from complaining about Tvor's group and to leave them alone it didn't have a chance to work. One of Tvor's inner circle of freshman cadets turned over to the Commandant evidence that showed Tvor to be responsible for the planning of the operation. In spite of their newly gained loyalty, Tvor's cadets allowed their leader to be led away to the detention center.

The trial was swift. No form of overt rejection of authority could be tolerated in Klingon society, especially at such an institution as the Imperial Star Academy. With the senior judge's words, these Klingon ideals would be upheld.

"Kyn tai Tvor, we, the duly authorized judges of this Court of Discipline, do find you guilty of insubordination, a rebellious attitude, and delinquent activity not in accordance with Klingon doctrine and the *Komerex Zha*. We hereby sentence you to be terminated by a Cadet Guard of Discipline. You will be taken to the parade ground for public execution immediately. This court is adjourned!"

The senior judge went to strike the gong behind him to signal adjournment. As he did so, a bright flash erupted from the gavel in his hand. All turned to look, only to see the senior judge fall across the central platform of the courtroom, the stump of his right arm continually spurting his bodily fluid.

As if on cue, all eyes turned to the restraint booth where Tvor was still standing. He didn't move or show any sign of acknowledgement. But there was a brief glimmer of satisfaction in the twinkle of his eyes.

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