

ENTERPRISING BRIDGE TALES

THE NEXT GENERATION

Marc Smith



*To boldly go where no bridge players have
gone before...*

An Honors eBook from Master Point Press

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Master Point Press
214 Merton St. Suite 205
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M4S 1A6
(647) 956-4933

info@masterpointpress.com

www.masterpointpress.com
www.bridgeblogging.com
www.teachbridge.com
www.ebooksbridge.com

Visit Marc Smith's website at: www.bridge-teacher.com

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

My first book, “Enterprising Tales”, was published in 1990, with monthly articles featuring the characters from the book appearing in both the ACBL Bulletin and International Bridge Popular Monthly. In the almost three decades since, I have written or co-written more than 30 books on the game, one of them the best-selling bridge book since Culbertson. I have also been fortunate to receive two American Bridge Teachers Association ‘Book of the Year’ awards. I am, though, still regularly asked when the promised sequel to that original book is going to be published. That question is now answered with this, the second volume of bridge tales in space.

In anticipation of this release, the original book, extensively rewritten, was republished by Masterpoint Press as “Enterprising Bridge Tales: The Original Stories” in early 2018. We now move forward a few decades into the 24th century for “Enterprising Bridge Tales: The Next Generation”, with new but (for many of you, I am sure) familiar characters. They face new challenges, both at the bridge table and out in the universe itself, and by the end produce new heroes.

Welcome to a universe where major interplanetary and inter-racial conflicts are settled at the bridge table rather than by warfare with mass casualties. The bridge played by members of the starship crew and their opponents is both entertaining and instructive. If you are also a ‘Trekkie’ at heart, then I hope you’ll enjoy this book on a double level.

I am truly indebted to those friends who have checked my hand analysis, my typing and my grammar, finding a frightening number of errors: David Bird, Charles Frith and Sue Shaw. Any errors that remain do so not because of their lack of diligence but are entirely my fault for making them in the first place.

Will there be a third installment in this series. Perhaps, or, as Captain Jonathan Lucien Pillar III would say, “Make it so, Number One.”

M.S. 2018

PROLOGUE

Space...

The final frontier...

Decades after the thrilling adventures of those aboard the original *USS Competitor*, Captain Jonathan Lucian Pillar III commands a new Galaxy-class starship of the same name. Their continuing mission is to explore unknown worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, and to compete against some of the best bridge players from across the universe.

Just as their predecessors had done, the crew of this new *USS Competitor* boldly go where no bridge players have gone before...

CHAPTER ONE

Trial by Combat

Captain's log, stardate 21134.6. We are cruising at warp seven towards the southern extremity of the Delta Quadrant. Our destination is the small planet of Sanka IV in the Corvus system, where we are to examine a new development that has been designated as Darwin Station. The Sankan government has expressed an interest in leasing the facility to the Federation as a scientific research center and trading post, and we are charged with assessing its suitability for those purposes.

The *USS Competitor* is less than a week out of star dock, but it is already beyond the well-travelled shipping lanes of space, in a region that has been only partially mapped. Crew members, who have been gathered together from across Starfleet, are still learning the names of their companions. Many have never met before, although some come with reputations that have been earned through years of experience. For some, this is their first extended stay in space.

At this speed, passing stars twinkle only briefly in the blackness on the large view-screen that dominates the forward wall of the starship's ultra-modern bridge. There is a quiet hum of conversation as everyone anticipates their arrival at the first stop on their five-year mission of exploration.

"Captain, I'm detecting some kind of force field ahead," announces Lieutenant Giorgio Fucina, the helm controller.

"Can you identify it, Lieutenant?" asks Captain Pillar.

"It appears to be some sort of enormous fence."

"Mr. Dieter?" The Captain turns to the starship's android Science Officer for his analysis.

"The force field stretches beyond the limits of our sensors in all directions," Lieutenant-Commander Dieter studies the small screen in front of him. "It appears to be immensely powerful. I would not recommend attempting to break through it, Captain."

"Slow to impulse power, helm."

There is a dazzling flash of light and a humanoid being suddenly appears on the bridge. Lieutenant Dorg, the ship's huge Klingon Chief of Security, moves quickly towards the intruder but is unceremoniously thrown backwards, apparently by a flick of the interloper's finger.

"Good day, Captain. My apologies for the intrusion, but you have entered a region of space where savage species," he looks pointedly down at the prone Klingon, "are not welcome."

"We are hardly savages," responds Pillar, keeping calm but clearly annoyed. "Who are you and what is the meaning of this invasion of my bridge?"

"Allow me to introduce myself. I am R. Your records will probably show that the last human ship in this region encountered my predecessor... 'Q', would you believe?" he smiles. "I am here to ensure that negotiations between yourselves and the Ferengi for the rights to access Darwin Station do not descend into the sort of violence that history suggests is always the first reaction of your species."

"We are not here to negotiate with anyone, but to inspect the station's suitability for our requirements," responds Pillar, haughtily.

"Yes, typical of you humans," R smirks. "Assuming that everyone in the universe is here solely for your benefit. On this occasion, though, there are competing interests. Considering your species' history, though, I thought it only fitting that negotiations between yourselves and the Ferengi should be conducted as a trial by combat."

"I shall be glad to represent the Federation," volunteers Lieutenant Dorg, brushing himself down as he rises to his full 7'2" height.

R laughs again. "That's not quite the sort of combat I had in mind. In this region of the universe we are more civilized, so you will provide a team of four to play a bridge match against the Ferengi for the right to access Darwin Station."

Captain Pillar glances around, trying to assess the strength of the team that he can muster to meet this challenge.

"We are amenable to such a contest," he announces.

"Very well. You may proceed to the planet. Beam your team down in two hours."

"The force field has gone, Captain," announces Dieter, looking up from his instruments.

"Of course it has," observes R, who then also disappears in another flash of light.

The recently-formed *USS Competitor* crew contains numerous strong players but no established partnerships. The Captain listens to input from his senior staff before deciding who will beam down to the planet to represent the Federation of Planets.

Captain Pillar has played a couple of times with Dieter, whose programming means that his ability to think logically rivals that of Vulcans, but without some of the irritating, human-like foibles that have crept into that race in recent generations. Pillar also considers Dieter the ship's best player (other than himself, it goes without saying).

Because of their telepathic abilities, Betazoids are forbidden from playing in partnership in major bridge events throughout the known universe. The Ship's Counselor, Diane Roma, avoids this prohibition due to her human father, who traces his roots back to ancient civilizations in the Mediterranean region of Earth. An olive-skinned beauty with long, flowing black hair, she grew up with a love of everything Greek, literature, music and food. Indeed, shortly after coming aboard ship, she discovered that Ten Forward, the starship's bar, stocks a little-known aperitif called ouzo. She anticipates becoming more acquainted as the mission progresses.

Few members of the *Competitor* crew know that Roma and the tall, handsome William DeVil were an item long before he graduated to the lofty rank of Commander. As soon as he hears about the upcoming match against the Ferengi, the ship's First Officer (and second-in-command) immediately makes it known to the Captain that he and Roma have a long-standing bridge partnership.

Whilst the Captain is loathe to select a pair he knows nothing about, he has to admit that the same is true of virtually every potential partnership aboard. There has not yet been time to organize even the first of what Pillar hopes will become regular on-board duplicates. It would seem, therefore, that the team has been selected.

* * *

The starship's quartet beams down to Darwin Station at the designated time and are directed to the playing area by officials from the Sankan Bridge Union. The match is to be contested over 32 boards, split into two sets of 16, with scoring by Universal Match Points (aka UMPs) on the standard scale.

Winning the toss, Captain Pillar elects to defer choosing opponents until the second half. When he is told that play from the Open Room will be broadcast live via VuGraph on both the *USS Competitor* and the Ferengi vessel, the Captain announces that he and Dieter will take their seats in that room.

“We don’t want to expose our less-experienced players to the extra pressure,” the Captain whispers to Dieter.

The android is about to mention that William DeVil won numerous inter-galactic events in his youth, but decides that perhaps it is better for the Captain to be pleasantly surprised by the quality of their teammates when the scoring takes place.

Pillar and Dieter enter the playing room to find their opponents already waiting. Hailing from Ferenginar, a Class-M planet at the centre of the Ferengi Alliance, they only made first contact with the Federation in 2364 and this is Pillar’s first encounter with the race. He has been briefed that their religion is based on extreme capitalism so, after shaking hands, he makes a point of counting his fingers to make sure they are all still there.

It appears that the Ferengi have sent their biggest guns to represent them: Grand Nagus Qharles, the head of the alliance’s Commerce Authority, is partnered by Liquidator Arun, a member of the Council of Economic Advisors.

“I’m directly descended from Grand Nagus Zek,” Qharles tells Pillar, and although this means little to the Captain he correctly assumes it is a big deal to a Ferengi. Physically, both opponents are much like any Ferengi: squat, humanoid creatures with lobed foreheads, large, ridged noses and unusually prominent ears.

“I see you have a Betazoid in your team,” comments Qharles.

“Half-Betazoid, actually,” corrects Pillar.

“It will do you no good.” Qharles clearly thinks that he has rumbled some devious Federation plot. “Our four-lobed brains are immune to the telepathic powers of Betazoids and Vulcans.”

“I’m sure she would never consider using such methods,” says Pillar, defensively. “Particularly in a friendly match.”

Both Ferengi chuckle heartily at the concept.

“Friendly?” Indeed, the whole notion of such a contest clearly mystifies the Grand Nagus. “Well, just between ‘friends’, perhaps we should have a little side wager on the outcome...”

“Isn’t the use of Darwin Station a sufficient incentive for both teams,” puts in Dieter, eager to save the Captain having to find an excuse for declining the proffered bet without losing face.

“Oh, one can never have too much incentive for winning any contest, can one, Arun?”

“Indeed one cannot, Grand Nagus,” agrees the Liquidator, shaking his head at the very idea.

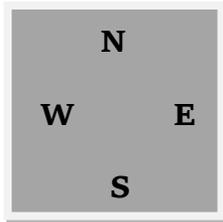
The boards are delivered just in the nick of time, curtailing further discussion. The Captain makes a mental note to explain to the Ferengi that members of 24th-century Federation states no longer have any use for gold-pressed latinum, or any other form of money come to that.

There is little action on the early deals, but then comes:

Love All
Dealer North

♠ A Q 10 5
♥ K 10 6 3
♦ A K 9 4
♣ 4

♠ 7 6 3
♥ Q 8 2
♦ 10 6
♣ K Q 10 6 3



♠ 4
♥ J 9 7 4
♦ Q 8 7 2
♣ A J 7 2

♠ K J 9 8 2
♥ A 5
♦ J 5 3
♣ 9 8 5

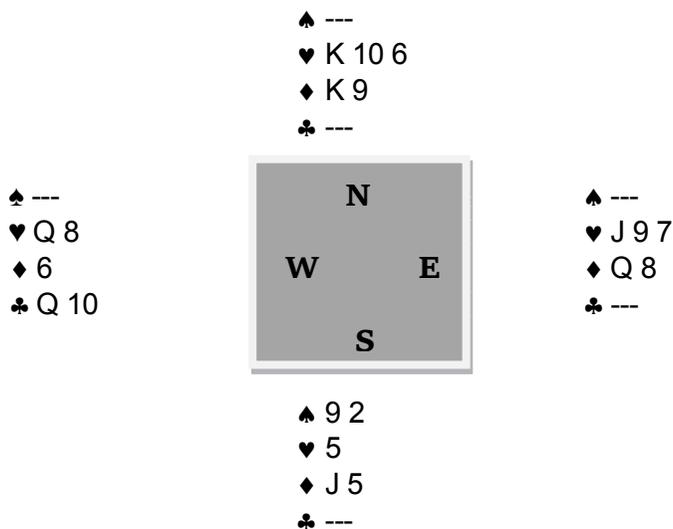
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
<i>Arun</i>	<i>Pillar</i>	<i>Qharles</i>	<i>Dieter</i>
--	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♠	All Pass	

The Captain is forced to open One Diamond by his ancient 5-card major method. Hearing a response in one of his majors, Pillar evaluates his hand as worthy of a force to game via a Four Club splinter bid. As he

can do so below game, Dieter feels obliged to cue-bid his heart control, and now Pillar launches into Blackwood. The android admits to holding two key cards and moments later finds himself in slam. Liquidator Arun leads the ♣K and the Captain proudly displays his dummy.

Dieter can see an easy route to eleven tricks, by ruffing two clubs in dummy, but that outcome is unlikely to satisfy his partner. Can he possibly engineer a twelfth trick from anywhere?

Dieter wins the diamond switch with dummy's ace, crosses to the ♠8, and ruffs a club with dummy's ♠10. He then overtakes the ♠Q and ruffs his last club with the ace of trumps. A heart to his ace then allows declarer to draw the last trump, leaving these cards:



Dieter leads the ♠9 and West throws a club.

“Discard the low diamond, please,” says declarer.

Grand Nagus Qharles scratches one of his enormous ears as he first considers discarding a heart, and then a diamond.

“It doesn’t matter,” interjects Dieter. “I believe you are caught in what is known as a trump squeeze.”

He is quite right: if East throws a diamond, declarer can cross to dummy's ♦K and a heart ruff will then provide entry to the winning ♦J. If he releases a heart, declarer will ruff that suit to set up his twelfth winner, with the ♦K as an entry.

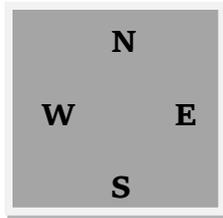
“Liquidator Arun take note: the best players always have the right hand to justify their partner’s bidding, no matter how ludicrous it may be.” Qharles turns to the Captain. “Wish you’d taken that side bet now? There’s still time...”

At the other table, the whole set seems particularly dull: one flat game contract follows another with little scope for swings. The final deal of the 16 appears to be no exception. This is the layout:

Game All
Dealer South

♠ 10 9 8 5
♥ Q 6
♦ K J 4
♣ A 10 7 3

♠ 7 3
♥ K 9 7 3 2
♦ 10 9 6 5
♣ Q 6



♠ A 6 4
♥ J 8 4
♦ Q 8 2
♣ K 8 4 2

♠ K Q J 2
♥ A 10 5
♦ A 7 3
♣ J 9 5

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
<i>DeVil</i>	<i>Galia</i>	<i>Roma</i>	<i>Arridor</i>
--	---	---	1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Commander DeVil leads the ♥3 and, when declarer plays low from dummy, Roma’s jack forces the ace. Declarer immediately leads a high trump, taken by East’s ace. A heart is returned to West’s king and the suit continued, declarer discarding a diamond from dummy as his ♥10 wins the trick.

A low club now goes to the ten and king. Roma exits with a trump and declarer draws a third round before leading the ♣J. The appearance of West’s queen enables declarer to claim ten tricks: N/S +620.

“I hoped we might beat it once declarer misguessed the hearts,”

comments Roma wistfully, as she returns her cards to the tray. “Not much in that set.”

The auction and contract are the same at the other table, but here Liquidator Arun opens the defense with the more challenging $\spadesuit 10$. Dieter studies dummy for a couple of nanoseconds (an eternity for him) before calling for the $\spadesuit J$. When East produces the $\spadesuit Q$, declarer is in danger of losing a trick in each suit.

Dieter sees that he may be able to establish a discard by leading a heart towards the queen, but a diamond continuation will then leave him stranded in dummy. He will be unable to reach the $\heartsuit A$ before the defenders get in to cash their diamond trick. What can be done?

Winning trick one with the $\spadesuit A$, declarer leads a low heart from his hand. West rises with the king and Pillar has already picked up dummy’s small heart before Dieter calls calmly for the queen.

“The queen?” queries the Captain.

“Yes, yes. Play the queen,” confirms Dieter.

Dieter wins the diamond continuation with dummy’s king and plays a second round of hearts, finessing the ten. When that holds, he cashes the $\heartsuit A$ to dispose of dummy’s losing diamond. After ruffing his remaining diamond in dummy, Dieter then starts on trumps. East takes his ace on the second round and safely exits with a third round of the suit. When a club is then played to the ten, though, East wins with the $\clubsuit K$ but has only clubs left. The enforced return collects West’s queen but makes little difference: declarer could always pick up the club suit for one loser himself with two finesses.

When the set is scored, the slam bid by Captain Pillar and elegantly made by Dieter produces the only double-digit swing. The Federation team leads by 11 UMPs (18-7) at the midway point of the match.

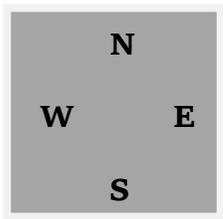
“We’re ahead, so we should continue with the same line-up,” announces the Captain, who has seen the Grand Nagus and the Liquidator returning to the Open Room. “No need for complacency, though,” he adds as he returns to the playing area.

“Why would we be complacent?” asks Dieter, of no one in particular. “We’re barely a game swing ahead.”

The narrow lead enjoyed by the starship team disappears almost immediately. These are the cards visible to declarer:

N/S Vul
Dealer North

♠ 10 9
 ♥ K 8 5
 ♦ K 10 8 4 3
 ♣ A K 3



♠ A J 4
 ♥ A 7 6 2
 ♦ Q 6 2
 ♣ Q 8 6

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
<i>Qharles</i>	<i>Dieter</i>	<i>Arun</i>	<i>Pillar</i>
--	1♦	Pass	1♥
1♠	Dbl	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

Dieter opens a natural One Diamond and then doubles the Grand Nagus's One Spade overcall to show three-card heart support. With good spades and only four hearts, the Captain's obvious Three Notrump bid ends the brief auction.

Qharles begins with the ♠6, dummy's nine winning as East signals an even number of spades. A diamond to the queen wins the second trick and the Captain sits back to take stock. He has eight tricks and it appears that East holds the ♦A and only two spades. How might he overcome a 4-1 diamond break?

Pillar sees that he may be able to establish a ninth trick in hearts if they split 3-3. To take advantage of that chance, though, he will have to duck a round of the suit now, before his second spade stopper is removed. If hearts fail to behave, he can still fall back on the diamond finesse later.

Declarer ducks a heart at trick three, East winning to continue spades. West discards a club when declarer cashes the top hearts, so Pillar next leads a diamond towards dummy. He is about to finesse the

ten when he sees that West has followed suit with the $\spadesuit A$! Four more rounds of spades follow and declarer, sadder and perhaps wiser, is left to enter 200 in the minus column on his scorecard.

“You had the jack of diamonds?” Pillar asks Arun.

“No, nine doubleton,” replies the Liquidator. “Nice defense, partner,” he adds.

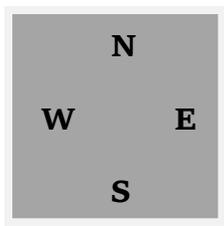
Results over the next few boards ebb and flow, but without any obvious large swing potential. On the final board of the match, though, the Captain again finds himself in the hot seat:

Game All

Dealer West

\spadesuit 7 5 2
 \heartsuit K J 8 4
 \diamondsuit 7 3
 \clubsuit A K J 7

\spadesuit K J 10 9 6 4
 \heartsuit 6 3
 \diamondsuit Q 10 8 5
 \clubsuit 3



\spadesuit 8 3
 \heartsuit 7
 \diamondsuit J 9 6 4 2
 \clubsuit Q 10 8 6 4

\spadesuit A Q
 \heartsuit A Q 10 9 5 2
 \diamondsuit A K
 \clubsuit 9 5 2

West	North	East	South
<i>Qharles</i>	<i>Dieter</i>	<i>Arun</i>	<i>Pillar</i>
2 \spadesuit	Pass	Pass	4 \heartsuit
Pass	5 \clubsuit	Pass	6 \heartsuit
All Pass			

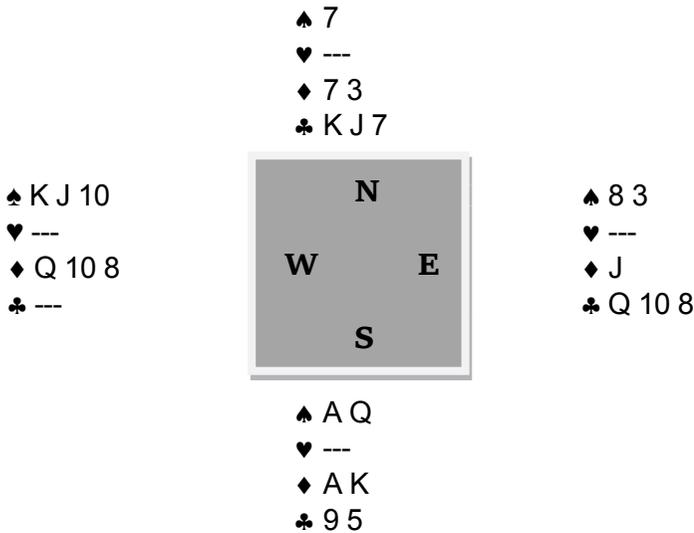
The Captain wonders briefly whether he should make a grand slam try over his partner’s Five Club cue-bid, but he eventually settles for what he expects to be a safe small slam. Qharles quickly produces the $\clubsuit 3$ and Dieter meticulously lays out his dummy.

With the spade finesse surely offside and the opening lead looking for all the universe like a singleton, Pillar quickly realizes that even his small slam may be in jeopardy. He can count eleven tricks but, with the

few missing high cards apparently all lying badly for him, how is he to avoid two losers? Pillar imagines his report to Starfleet, explaining how he failed to secure use of Darwin Station by bidding an ambitious slam on the last board of the match.

Although he has still not come up with a plan of any sort, it seems that there is nothing for it but to at least start playing rather than simply just staring at dummy. The Captain wins in dummy with the ♣A and then draws trumps in two rounds, East discarding a diamond.

Pillar recalls reading somewhere that if you cash enough trumps the opponents might discard the wrong thing so. with no better idea, he starts cashing his hearts. Qharles happily begins throwing spades whilst Arun releases a club and another diamond. When the fifth round of trumps is played, though, it becomes apparent that Arun does not want to release any of his remaining cards. Eventually, he lets another diamond go and, when declarer cashes his last trump, both defenders throw diamonds. These cards now remain:



Realizing that cashing winners has apparently caused some distress to right-hand Ferengi, the Captain wonders if he should simply continue the process. Even though he is out of trumps, he still has the top diamonds, so now he cashes those too. Everyone follows to the ace but Arun discards a very slow spade on the ♦K. The Captain sits back to

think: he remembers seeing one club discarded, but that was all, isn't it? So, Arun still holds ♣Q-10-8 over dummy, and his other card must be a spade.

A light dawns, and the Captain lays down the ♠A. Rechecking his calculations four times, the Captain is fairly sure that Arun's last three cards are now all clubs. He leads the ♣9 and, when West discards a spade, lets it run. Arun wins with the ♣10 but then has to surrender the last two tricks to dummy's ♣K-J. The slam has been made.

Roma and DeVil arrive soon after the last hand is completed in the Open Room. The Federation team not only holds on to their narrow half-time lead, but adds another 6 UMPs to win by 17.

"We would have lost if I'd gone down in that slam at the end," observes the Captain. "I just hope Starfleet is pleased with the facilities at their new outpost."

At that moment, R's reappearance is heralded by the customary bright flash of light.

"Congratulations, Captain, you and your team have won the rights to access Darwin Station on behalf of the Federation," he claps his hands. "What's more, I now understand why you were selected as leader of this mission. After all, there can't be many starship captains with no hair, can there?"

"What in the universe has me having no hair to do with anything?" asks Pillar, clearly irritated.

"Oh come, come, Captain," retorts R. "I've read your mission statement... 'to boldly go where no person has gone before'."

"It's boldly," explodes Pillar. "To boldly go!"

"Well, that sounds grammatically incorrect to me, but what do I know? I'm only omnipotent," laughs R. "And if your slam bidding is anything to go by, you certainly shall go boldly. Let's just hope that your partner's declarer play is up to the task for the remainder of your journey. Bon voyage, Captain. I suspect we shall meet again."

With that, R disappears, leaving the momentarily-blinded starship quartet to return to their vessel by more conventional means.

Back on the bridge. The Captain is seated in his customary chair, having already posted details of the slam hand that concluded the match where it can be seen by all crew members.

"Bid boldly, play safe. I should adopt that as my motto," muses Pillar. "Perhaps someone will use it as a book title one day."

"I just hope that's not the way all of our matches will go," observes Commander DeVil.

"I doubt it, Number One. I'm sure some will be much more difficult," replies the Captain. "Let's go and see what's out there."

"Aye, sir," says DeVil.

"Warp three, helm," instructs Pillar.

"Aye, Sir. Warp three."

"Engage!"

BRIDGE IN THE 24TH CENTURY

Decades after the adventures of Captain James T Quirk and the crew of the USS Competitor, we now follow the next generation of bridge crusaders as they traverse the universe. Led by Captain Jonathan Lucian Pillar III, the starship's latest incarnation is crewed by many familiar characters: an android Science Officer, an imposing Klingon as Chief of Security, and a young boy who learned the game playing against robots on the ship's holodeck.

Crew members play a devilish Ferengi team for the rights to a new outpost, visit a planet populated exclusively by the over-60s, and face a nail-biting death-match against a treacherous team of Cardasians. Then there are the fearsome Romulans, once allies and, for the last half century, sworn enemies.

In the thrilling conclusion, two members of the USS Competitor crew join forces with the Vulcans and Romulans to take on a team of mercenaries recruited by The Borg. At stake is the fate of billions of life-forms, across large swathes of the universe, as The Borg tries to expand its territory into Federation space.

This is *Enterprising Bridge Tales: The Next Generation*.



MARC SMITH is a Grand Master and former European junior champion who has represented England and Great Britain at numerous World and European championships. The author of over thirty books, he co-wrote the bestselling *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know* with Barbara Seagram and the *Bridge Technique Series* with David Bird. He is a two-time winner of the American Bridge Teachers' Association Book of the Year award.