

STARDATE 57712.3

“You’re kidding, right? Ensign Joshua Mason exclaimed as he almost choked on his drink.

Ensign David Grey Wolf smiled at the other young officer. “I don’t think she’s kidding, Josh.” He turned his head toward Helana Bradzo. “He fell in love with your spots, I bet.”

The young Trill woman shrugged her shoulders. “Maybe. Maybe not.” She picked up her glass of synthehol and took a sip before setting the glass back on the table. After swallowing, she said, “He never really told me, but it doesn’t matter. We had a good time on the first date.”

“You mean there was a second date?” Mason asked.

“And a third,” the Trill replied as she smiled widely.

Mason shook his head. “Unbelievable.”

“You’re not jealous, are you? Ensign Bobbi Stephens asked the other ensign.

Mason started to blush and stumbled over his words. “Of... of course not. I just don’t understand what Helana saw in Bomber.”

“Bumbler,” Grey Wolf corrected incorrectly.

“His name is Boimler; Brad Boimler.” Bradzo frowned slightly. “At least get his name right.”

Grey Wolf and Mason tried, unsuccessfully, to squelch their snickering. Both knew the name of the person in question, but they were in the same dormitory at the Academy and Boimler was frequently the butt of jokes.

Mason held his hand over his mouth to suppress his laughter. “I’m sorry, Helana, but your boy Bradward just doesn’t seem like someone that you would be interested in.”

“Why not?”

“Well...he frequently comes across as neurotic and uptight,” Mason said. “I remember how he always stressed over assignments and memorized every regulation in the book. I even heard that he corrected Commander Michaels in front of the entire history class when he mistakenly gave the wrong stardate of the Cestus III incident between Kirk and the Gorn.”

“I’m sure Commander Michaels appreciated Cadet Boimler’s attention to detail,” Ensign Tavol interjected. The Vulcan, up to this point, simply observed the conversation between his fellow junior officers. “And I admire Mister Boimler for memorizing all Starfleet regulations. It is a sign of a well-disciplined mind.”

“You probably find that an unusual quality for humans, huh?” Joshua Mason was baiting his roommate—something that he frequently enjoyed doing to the Vulcan.

Tavol, having experienced more than a few attempts by Mason to engage in ‘friendly’ badgering, merely raised one eyebrow.”

“Hey, Josh, you remember the time that Boimler’s roommate walked in on him recording a *captain’s* log?” Grey Wolf asked.

Bobbi, finishing her drink quickly, set her glass down on the table hard. She didn’t exactly slam it, but she set it down loud enough to get her friends’ attention. “You guys are terrible!” She shot the two ensigns a look that could drill holes through their heads as efficiently as a tight phaser beam. Turning her attention to the Trill, Bobbi offered comforting eyes. “Don’t listen to these guys, Helana.”

“I know how they can be. I guess I should be used to the immaturity of children like them after thirteen lifetimes.”

Mason and Grey Wolf turned toward each other and momentarily stared seriously and turned back to face Helana. In unison, they said, “We’re sorry.” Mason’s lips started to quiver as he tried to hold back a smirk; however, David Grey Wolf was able to maintain a straight face.

Helana Bradzo jabbed her index finger at each one. “You two are asking for trouble.”

Bobbi placed a hand on Helana’s arm. “As you said, they’re children.” After a brief pause, Bobbi spoke again. “So, are you still seeing Ensign Boimler?”

Helana shook her head. “No, we went on a few dates, but I never was as serious as he was. I think he was more interested in having a girlfriend—any girlfriend! —than he was in having *me* as a girlfriend.” She smiled at Bobbi and her other friends. “And, like you two children (the Trill glared at David and Josh), I also thought that he did have some neurotic tendencies.”

“I told you that,” Josh Mason said while crossing his arms.

Bobbi turned to Mason, sitting next to her, teasingly slapping his arm. “You don’t have to be a jerk about it.”

“He can’t help himself,” David Grey Wolf said.

Tavol was the first to notice Lieutenant Josiah Goldberg, with several PADDs in hand, enter the lounge and approach. He started to stand; however, the approaching officer held up his other hand to indicate that the five ensigns should remain seated.

Grey Wolf was the first to speak. “Would you like to join us, Lieutenant?”

Goldberg, one of the operations officers and the newly appointed training officer shook his head as he offered a smile. “No, thank you, Ensign. I’m just here to give you all your next rotation assignments,” he said as he started handing each ensign a PADD.



To Boldly Go: The Class of 2380

A U.S.S. Republic Story

By Cleve Johnson

Each of the five recent Academy graduates activated their devices and began reading. Three out of the five smiled. Taval, as a typical Vulcan, kept a neutral demeanor, but the fifth ensign did not display much enthusiasm, and it did not go unnoticed.

“Problem, Mister Mason?” Goldberg cocked his head to one side.

Mason looked up. “No...no, sir. I’m just wondering why I am assigned to sciences when I just finished a rotation in that department.”

“Commander Grezka requested you spend another month in his department,” Goldberg said. “It seems that Lieutenant Chang felt that your time in the botany lab did not give you enough of a challenge.”

“I grew up on a farm, sir. My father is a horticulturist, and my mother is a botanist, so I had already learned a lot from them. I was bored.”

“Which is why you need to be stretched in an area that you are not as familiar with,” Goldberg said. He turned his attention to the young Vulcan. “Taval? Do you like your assignment?”

Taval never let his calm, stoic manner indicate his thoughts. “I neither like nor dislike my assignment, Lieutenant. It is logical that as part of our recent posting to the ship, we are expected to learn as much as possible about starship operations in all departments; however, I did not expect to be assigned to tactical until a later rotation.”

“What did you expect, Ensign?”

“I expected that a rotation in security would precede the tactical position. It seems logical since Ensigns Bongani and Tarkington have rotated in that order.”

“I know that Commander Lexra initiated the first couple of rotations, and he has a certain predictable pattern. I’m not as predictable, so don’t look for a logical pattern in the way I hand out the assignments.”

“Understood for future reference, sir.”

Goldberg looked at the others. “Anyone else have any comments or questions?” After a few seconds of silent head shaking, the lieutenant smiled. “Good. Notice that some of you have been assigned to different shifts than this past rotation, so you might need to adjust your sleeping schedules. You all have tomorrow off to adjust as needed. The new rotation starts with the Gamma shift tomorrow night.”

“Thank you, sir,” Helana Bradzo said on behalf of the entire group as Lieutenant Goldberg turned and made his way toward the exit.



Ensign Jamilla Bongani left the bridge, where she had finished serving as the Beta shift tactical officer under Lt. Julian Sims’ watchful eye. Sims was the regular Beta shift tactical officer and had been Bongani’s mentor for the past four weeks.

As she took the turbolift to deck three where her quarters were located, Bongani smiled at the last thing that Sims had said to her before her exit from the bridge. He had told her that he was impressed with how quickly she had picked up the essentials of the tactical position and that she would be an asset if she decided to focus her career on tactical and weapons. That was not her goal, at least at present, but she might consider that path as a backup. Her dream had always been to follow in her mother's footsteps—command.

The turbolift doors parted, and Bongani went to her quarters. Her roommate, Ensign Falori, waited in the doorway. Bongani smiled. "I see that you got off duty before I did," The Kenyan woman said.

"I didn't leave my shift early," The Bolian nurse stated. "That would be cheating."

"How did you get here before me then?"

"Maybe my turbolift was faster," Falori said jokingly. "Sickbay is only two decks down." The nurse turned and walked into the shared quarters.

"And the bridge is only two decks above us." Bongani followed her roommate and made her way to the work desk.

"I'm going to take a shower," Falori said as she exited the main room and entered the bathroom.

Jamilla sat down and turned toward the console. "Computer, I wish to send a message to Earth, United States of Africa, Kenya, city of Muranga. Address the message to Bakari Bongani."

"Begin recording," the computer replied.

"Good day, Father," she began. "I just completed my latest monthly rotation. It has been a privilege to serve on the bridge learning the nuances of the tactical station. I had a good teacher, and he gave me high praise at the end of my last shift. I believe that this rotation has been my favorite so far. It was a challenge, but it was more fulfilling than my previous assignments in security and sciences before that. For the next month, I will be assigned to shuttle operations and maintenance." Jamilla paused a moment as she realized that she wished she could communicate with her father in real-time, but the distance to Earth was hundreds of light years away, so it would take subspace communications several hours to get the message there. "This next assignment will be difficult since my skills as an engineer were never very good. Basic engineering and warp theory were my hardest classes at Starfleet Academy. The good news is that piloting a shuttle will not be an issue as I have been taught very well." She paused as she started taking off her uniform jacket. Tossing it on her bunk, she continued. "I miss you, Baba,¹ and look forward to your reply. I love you." Jamilla wiped a tear from her cheek. "End recording and transmit."

¹ Swahili term for 'father'

Falori was standing in the open doorframe between the head and the living/sleeping area. “I miss my parents, too—all six of them,” Falori said.

“Six?” Jamilla turned in her chair to face the other woman.

“My biological father has two other wives besides my biological mother, who also has two other husbands.”

“I have heard that Denobulan family structures were complicated,” Jamilla said, “but I was unaware how complicated.”

“I understand. Most non-Denobulans have the same reaction.” Falori sat on her bunk. “So, I overheard you recording a message to your father. You are going to spend the next month in shuttle ops? Are you looking forward to it?”

“Yes,” Jamilla said. “I especially look forward to the piloting.”

“Have you been assigned to the CONN yet?”

“Not yet, but I hope it is soon.” Jamilla remembered her mother’s stories about serving at the CONN during her time on the *Copenhagen* when she was a junior officer. Jamilla longed to hear those stories again, but Captain Bongani and the crew of the starship *Vespa* were currently in the Gamma Quadrant. Jamilla felt a rush of sadness flow over her when she realized that she had not had any direct contact with her mother in almost two years. Her mother was unable to be at Jamilla’s graduation from the Academy. And the subspace messages were few and infrequent; however, Jamilla’s mother did manage to send a congratulatory message that arrived about a week after the graduation ceremony. It was a short message.

Ensign Falori saw the sadness and pain on Jamilla's face. “Anything I can do?”

Jamilla forced herself to smile ever so slightly. “I appreciate your concern, but I will be all right. I was just thinking about my mother.”

“Any word when she will return to the Alpha Quadrant?”

Jamilla shook her head. “No, but I do not expect to see her for a long time.”

Falori, as a nurse, had been trained to be sensitive to her patients’ physical, emotional, and mental states and do whatever she could to alleviate the pain, but Jamilla was her roommate and her friend, and Falori could not help but feel a personal involvement. She wanted to support Jamilla, but she had not been willing to reveal her inner feelings. “Want to get a drink or take a walk in the botanical garden?” Falori asked.

“Jamilla considered her roommate’s proposal for several moments. Finally, she nodded in agreement as the corners of her lips moved slightly upward. “Thank you, Falori. I would enjoy a walk among the trees and plants.”



After finishing his shift in engineering, Ensign Kenneth Tarkington went to the forward observation lounge on deck two for a synthale and time to relax. As he sat at one of the small

tables, he looked out of the large overhead curved windows and enjoyed the beauty of the stars. After about thirty to forty minutes of reflection, he left and went to his quarters. He entered his quarters, which he shared with David Grey Wolf, and was surprised to see his roommate still awake. “It’s almost 0100, Dave. Late for you, isn’t it?”

“Hey, Kenny.” Grey Wolf smiled at his roommate. “The new rotation schedule has me on Gamma shift starting in less than twenty-four hours, so I need to stay awake to adjust.”

“Bummer,” Tarkington said. “So, what’s your new assignment?”

“Engineering. I’m going to be shadowing that new engineering officer—the one who came on board a couple of days ago.”

“Lieutenant Tamar?”

“Yeah. I heard that she had transferred from the *Monarch*.”

“She’s nice,” Ken said. “And she’s a knockout!”

David shook his head and smiled. His roommate had been trying to fix him up with every pretty cadet and junior officer since their third year at the Academy. “You know that I have a girlfriend back on Earth, right?”

“Hundreds of light years away,” Tarkington replied. “You can have more than one woman if you want.”

Dave grabbed the pillow from his bunk and threw it at the other man, who ducked out of the way.

Tarkington smiled at the young Sioux. “I thought your ancestors took more than one wife.”

“That practice ended about five hundred years ago,” David said. “What’s your next assignment?” he asked, trying to divert Kenny to another topic.”

Tarkington smiled, noticing his friend’s tactic, as he sat down on the edge of his bunk. “OPS. I’m still going to be on Beta shift.”

“I guess we won’t be seeing too much of each other since I will be going on duty when you are ending your shift and going to sleep when I end mine.”

“We don’t see that much of each other now, Dave.” Tarkington paused a moment. “Hey, since you need to stay awake for a few hours, how about going to the holodeck with me? I will even let you pick the program.”

Dave smiled. “Okay. I choose Custer’s Last Stand. You’ll be Custer.”

“And I bet that you will be your famous ancestor—Chief Sitting Bull.”

“Sitting Bull was not actually at the Little Big Horn. He just planned it. Crazy Horse led the attack.”

“Okay, Chief, but the holodeck historical programs do allow for the outcomes to be different than what’s recorded in the history files.”

“Want to bet which side will win?” David was confident that the Battle of the Little Big Horn on the holodeck would end the same as history recorded it.

“Fifty credits.”

“Agreed.”

The two ensigns stood and exited their quarters to head for their holodeck adventure.



Ensign Joshua Mason was a light sleeper, which meant that he was awakened prematurely when the door panels to his quarters slid apart. He shielded his eyes when the light from the corridor came through the door. Groggily, he sat up and watched the silhouette with pointed ears transform into his roommate as the doors slid shut again. “Tavol, do you know how hard it is to sleep when you enter the room?”

“I apologize, Ensign Mason,” Tavol said. “It was not my intention to wake you”

“That’s what you said yesterday morning and the morning before.” Mason swung his legs off the bed, placing them on the deck, as he sat up. “What time is it, anyway?”

Tavol did not need to consult the computer as he had trained his ‘internal clock’ years ago to keep an accurate account of the passage of time. “It is precisely 0237 point 6 hours.”

Mason let his head drop as he shook it back and forth. “You at least let me sleep until 0400 yesterday. Why so early this morning?”

“Again, I apol....”

“Don’t apologize, Tavol. Just answer the question.”

Tavol placed his hands behind his back. “I was meditating in the botanical garden as it is typically devoid of people during the early hours; however, Ensigns Bongani and Falori decided to visit the garden while I was meditating. I proceeded to Holodeck Two, but Ensigns Grey Wolf and Tarkington were running a historical program from an incident that occurred during the latter part of Earth’s Nineteenth Century.”

“The Battle of the Little Bighorn,” Mason interjected.

Tavol raised his left eyebrow. “How did you know that was the program that they were running?”

Mason smirked. “It’s Grey Wolf’s favorite program.” He looked at the Vulcan. “So why didn’t you go to another holodeck?”

“Holodecks One and Three were also occupied, and Holodeck Four was offline due to routine maintenance.” Tavol walked to his bunk and sat on the edge.



Mason stared at him for a moment, not fully understanding the Vulcan's need to meditate as much as Taval did...in the early morning hours, especially. "Isn't there another place on the ship where you can meditate?"

Counselor Laris has offered her office as a place for all Vulcan members of the crew when she is not using it."

"I assume that the counselor usually does not use her office during the Gamma shift."

"That is correct, Ensign Mason."

"Josh...or Joshua," Mason said. "We have known each other since we started at the Academy, and we have been roommates since being assigned to this ship. I think that you should be comfortable calling me by my given name by now."

"It is not a matter of feeling comfortable. I simply do not want to show disrespect."

"You're not disrespecting me by using my first name. We're equals...and roommates. At least until one of us gets promoted and gets private quarters."

"Very well; I will refer to you by your first name, Joshua."

"Now that that is settled, why don't you take the counselor up on her offer?"

"I do not want to impose upon her hospitality," Taval said.

"She would not have offered if it was an imposition." Mason cocked his head to one side as he studied his roommate's face. "What do you have against the counselor, Taval?"

"Why do you assume that I hold anything against her?"

"I'm pretty good at reading people's expressions...even yours," Mason said. "Your face has a slight green tinge when you are bothered by something. And your skin tone turned green when I mentioned the counselor."

Taval raised his eyebrow. "Fascinating. I must endeavor to control my...skin tone in the future."

Mason smiled. "Now that I know you're bothered, why not tell me?"

"I...am unprepared to reveal information of a personal nature."

"Don't trust me to keep it to myself?"

Taval almost smiled. Almost. "I do trust you, Joshua. I do not always understand your human ways; however, I consider you to be my closest friend." He realized that Josh Mason had provided sound advice in the past and decided to confide in his roommate. "I am reluctant to accept any offer from Counselor Laris as she represents the antithesis of what it means to be Vulcan."

"Isn't she only half Vulcan?"

"Yes, that is true; however, Ambassador Spock is half Vulcan, and he emulates Vulcan behavior regardless of his mixed heritage."

Mason nodded. “That’s a point to consider, but did you know that the counselor was raised by her father’s family on Betazed.”

Tavol, again, raised one eyebrow. “I was not aware of that fact. Perhaps my judgment is based on incomplete information about her background.”

“Why judge her at all, Tavol? I thought that Vulcans followed the philosophy of IDIC.”

Tavol was silent for a moment as he considered his friend’s words. “Thank you, Joshua. I appreciate your insight and now realize that I should reconsider how I view Counselor Laris.”

“Good. Now let me try to get a few more hours sleep...if I can.”

“Have you spoken to Doctor Achebe or one of his assistants about your sleep disorder?”

Mason glared at Tavol. “It’s not a sleep disorder. I just sleep lightly, which means that it doesn’t take much to wake me up.”

“Understood. But I believe that you should consult someone in Sickbay about a sleep aid to help you to sleep not so lightly.”

Mason flopped backward on his bunk and covered his head with his blanket. “Good night, Tavol.”



Ensign Bobbi Stephens fell through the air. The planet’s surface was getting closer every second. Barring a miracle, she only had a few moments until her death. Why did she ever let Josh talk her into going skydiving? Sure, she had done it many times before, but this time, it was a sub-orbital jump—her first...and last. She was going to die, and it was Josh Mason’s fault. Her last thought was that she would not have the opportunity to break up with the man who had caused her death. The ground rushed up as she let out one final scream.

She quickly shot up in a sitting position, her face and arms covered in sweat.

“Are you okay?” Helana Bradzo got out of bed and rushed to her friend’s side.

“Sorry,” Bobbi said. “I was having a dream.”

“A bad one, I would say.”

“Yeah, you can say that,” Bobbi said as she wiped the sweat from her face with her bunk covers. Her body was still shaking from the recent mental images. “I hope I never relive *that* again.”

“Do you want to talk about your dream?” Helana placed her hand on Bobbi’s shoulder.

“I was falling. I thought I was going to die. I woke up right before I hit the ground.”

“Why were you falling, Bobbi?”

“I was skydiving with Josh, and my chute didn’t open. I panicked.” Bobbi was still breathing heavily as she recounted the nightmare. “I never wanted to do that sub-orbital jump

that day because I had a bad feeling about it. Josh talked me into it even though I told him that I didn't think it was a good idea, but he pushed me into it."

"Are you saying this wasn't just a bad dream, that it was a memory of a real event?" Helana had known Bobbi since they were first-year cadets, and this was the first time that she had heard about the incident.

"It really happened," Bobbi said. "It was the summer break before our fourth year. Josh and I had spent a lot of time together and things were starting to get serious. We had done some fun things before, but Josh wanted to do a sub-orbital jump. You know what a daredevil he can be."

"Yea, I know."

"So, you did not want to make the jump, and he forced you?"

"He pressured me, but I decided to do it...against my better judgment. If it wasn't for the automatic emergency transporter sensor activating a beam out, I would not be here."

"It sounds like you were lucky."

"But in my dreams, the beam out doesn't happen."

"You've had this dream before?"

"Yes. At least a dozen times." Bobbi's breathing slowed to normal as she talked to her roommate. "Only, in my dreams, I die...or wake up right before I die. But when the incident happened, I was beamed to safety when I was about a hundred meters above the surface."

"Have you talked to a counselor about this?"

"I haven't talked to anyone about it."

"As your friend, I think you should talk to Counselor Laris." Helana gave a gentle smile. "Please see her. For your peace of mind."

"I'll consider it." Bobbi smiled back. "I want to tell you something that really bothers me about these dreams."

"Of course," Helana said. "You can trust me to keep it confidential."

"Thank you," Bobbi said. "I stopped seeing Josh after that because I..."

"...didn't trust him?"

"Partially that, but I was scared like I had never been scared before. And I blamed him for pushing me into something that almost got me killed."

Helana closed her eyes. After several seconds, she opened them again and nodded. "I understand how you felt, Bobbi. My second host, Rezul, pushed someone that he cared about into an uncomfortable situation, too. It took a long time for the two of them to work it out."

"But you did work it out?"

“Eventually. Rezul married her a few years later.”

“I have no plans to marry Josh!”

“Helana held her hand up to her mouth to keep her chuckling from becoming full-blown laughter. “I’m sorry.”

Bobbi smiled. “It’s okay. My reaction was pretty comical.”

Helana became serious again. “Have you talked to Josh about how scared you were? Have you told him that he broke your trust?”

“No, but he and I have become good friends even though we don’t have the same relationship that we did. The trust between us is gradually being restored.”

“What about the blame? Have you forgiven him for putting you in that situation?”

Bobbi creased her eyebrows together as she took a deep look at herself. “I don’t think that I have, Helana.”

“I’m not a counselor, Bobbi, but thirteen lifetimes of experience has taught me that holding onto grudges or having unforgiveness toward someone can eat a person up from the inside out.” Helana took her friend’s hand. “Is it possible that your recurring nightmare might be caused by you still hanging onto some bitterness toward Josh?”

Bobbi slowly nodded as she made eye contact with Helana. “It’s...possible. Thanks.”

Helana smiled as she let go of Bobbi’s hand and returned to sit on her bunk. “So, what are your next steps?”

Without hesitation, Bobbi began to speak. “I’m going to do as you suggest and talk to the counselor. And afterward, I think I need to talk to Josh about the situation.”

“Good for you, Bobbi, but you might consider getting some more sleep before you do. It’s not even 0430 yet, and we were going to sleep in and relax before the new rotation starts.”

“Agreed,” Bobbi leaned back into her bunk and covered herself as she closed her eyes, confident that her nightmare would not revisit her...at least for the rest of this sleep cycle.



0812 Hours...

Josh Mason, Taval, David Grey Wolf, and Ken Tarkington were having breakfast in the aft observation lounge. Mason finished his coffee and set the cup on the table. He looked at the others and said, “So, gentlemen, what are your plans for the day?”

Grey Wolf looked at his friend and shrugged. “I’m not sure yet. I just know that I need to stay awake a few more hours.”

“Oh, you’re one of the lucky ones that had to change shifts for the next rotation,” Mason said with a smirk.

“Your sympathy is underwhelming,” Grey Wolf replied. “You probably get to stay on Alpha shift, don’t you?”

Mason smiled widely. “Just the luck of the draw, Grey Wolf.”

“What department, Josh?” Tarkington asked.

Mason’s smile disappeared. “I didn’t get the luck of the draw,” he said. “I’m still stuck in the science department.”

“What position?”

“Astrometrics,” Mason replied.

“Could be worse,” Tarkington said sympathetically. “At least it’s not planetary sciences.”

Mason nodded his head to one side. “That’s true. I just hope that it’s not as boring as botany was.”

Tarkington offered a half-smile as he turned to face the Vulcan. “What about you, Taval? What is your assignment?”

“I have been assigned to Tactical,” Taval stated. “I will begin my training in the aft torpedo room for the first three days followed by another three days in the weapons simulator room.”

David Grey Wolf leaned forward and rested his forearms on the table. “I heard that Tactical is challenging.”

“It is,” Tarkington said. “Training was rigorous, and there were several tests. I passed them all but just barely.”

“Don’t scare him, Kenny,” Grey Wolf said.

“He’s a Vulcan, Dave,” Tarkington replied. “They don’t get scared. Right, Taval?”

“That is essentially correct, Mister Tarkington; however, Vulcans do experience concerns regarding certain situations on occasion.” Taval turned his attention to David Grey Wolf. “This situation is not one of those occasions.”

Grey Wolf smiled as he realized that he and Taval were similar in at least one thing. “I like to face a challenge head-on, too.”

Joshua Mason nudged Grey Wolf gently with his elbow. “We’re about to have company.”

Helana Bradzo and Bobbi Stephens had entered the aft lounge and made their way toward the four men and stopped next to the table. Helana smiled. “Gentlemen, do you have room for two more?”

“Of course,” Mason said as he got up and pulled two chairs from the nearest table to where they were sitting. “You seem happy this morning, Helana. I take it that you have forgiven Dave and me for last night’s teasing?”

“I’m considering it,” the Trill woman replied. “I’m just happy to have a day off before the new training rotation starts.”

“Looking forward to your assignment?” Grey Wolf asked.

“Yes, I am,” Helana said. “I’ve been looking forward to this assignment since coming on board!”

“What department will you be serving in?” Taval asked.

Her face lit up and brightened the room. “Flight Operations!”

“Sounds great, Helana,” Mason said. “Just don’t fly us into a meteor storm.”

“You mean the way you flew us into a fleet of Breen battleships during the Kobayashi Maru test?” Bobbi’s tone was sarcastic. “As I remember, you didn’t follow my orders when I was in the center seat.”

“I thought that you were making the wrong decision, and I was trying to help save our skins.”

“Josh, your job was not to second-guess your captain,” Tarkington said.

Mason thought about protesting until he saw the look on Bobbi Stephens’ face. He nodded as he looked at her. “I know that now. Sorry, Bobbi.”

Bobbi’s demeanor relaxed as she projected a somewhat jovial look. “Apology accepted.” She looked into Mason’s eyes; her gaze lingered longer than she had intended, so she looked around the table at each of her friends. “I wonder what’s in store for each of us. Where will our careers take us?”

“We’ll find out,” David Grey Wolf said. He lifted his coffee cup in the air. “Here’s to the Class of 2380.”

The End