

It's Classified

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Summary

2226: Rose Reilly, fresh out of the Academy, stumbles into a place she shouldn't, and is confronted with the reality of being a Starfleet officer -- especially one with a Starfleet father as her direct superior.

He stared at the report in his hand for a moment before his eyes shot up at the officer that brought it to him. "Explain. From the beginning."

His daughter wisely avoided shooting off her mouth. "Sir —"

"Ensign, what the *hell* were you doing in that lab?"

Rose's face flushed. She didn't like being talked down to, but he was the ranking officer here.

Rose took a breath and met his eyes. "Sir, I received a communication *from* that lab telling me to go there."

"And it's just routine for you to ignore regulations and *not* report that communication, but also go and investigate yourself." He threw the PADD down on the desk hard to make a loud point. "You've been out of the Academy two months with that rank and you do this?"

She opened her mouth to speak but shut it quickly.

Lucius stood from his desk. "I'm waiting for an answer."

She looked off to the side for a moment before meeting his eyes again. "I thought —"

He raised his voice. "You *thought*?"

"I made a mistake, sir."

"Damn right you did!" He slapped his hand on the desk. "You trespassed into a restricted area, Rose. A clearly marked, so visible the god-damn Klingons can see it from their back porch, restricted area." He ran his hand through his hair.

"Dad —"

He pointed at her. "You don't call me that here."

She bit her lip and for a moment she looked six again — just coming back from school having gotten another note sent home with her.

He blinked his eyes, the memory fading away as it was replaced with the now. She was an officer here, a full-blown member of Starfleet. She wasn't his little girl. She wasn't a hyperactive student.

She was an *officer*.

He sat back down and took a deep breath. "Ensign, you trespassed into a restricted area —"

"The doors were open!" She stepped closer to the desk. "Captain, it was unguarded and it was ... it was totally unlocked! There wasn't any protection, any deterrent!"

He rubbed his forehead for a long moment before nodding. "Fine." He looked up at the ceiling and then back at her. "There's a reason for that ... and I'm going to tell you, despite the fact that you don't have clearance and you don't have the rank to even sniff it."

She blinked at him a few times. "You're ... wait, what?"

“I’m going to tell you something you shouldn’t know. Because, frankly, I can’t write you up for anything.” He took the PADD and bashed it repeatedly into the side of his desk until it broke.

Rose stared at it.

“The lab you so easily entered is doing classified research, the kind that you don’t talk about. Ever.” He leaned forward. “Let me stress that last part again, Rose: don’t talk about it, *ever*. You and I will have this conversation, then we never mention it again. Understand?”

Her face paled. “Yes, sir.”

“All right.” He shook his head. “Those bastards in the lab did this. They did it on purpose.”

She looked confused. “Did what?”

“You. The lab. The doors being open.” He sighed. “The lab is pursuing an answer or a question. Or both. The Academy’s philosophy department would have a field day with it.” He chuckled. “Let me ask you this: what is the meaning of life?”

She looked even more confused.

He nodded. “Tough one, isn’t it? But that’s what those bastards are looking for, in a sense. I can’t go into specifics. But that’s what those two are doing.”

“Two?”

He hated what he was about to say, but it was the truth. “Dolphins.”

“Dolphins?”

“The lab has two dolphins in it. Larry and Ed — assholes, but incredibly good at their jobs.”

“They have jobs?”

He laughed. “They find things, Rose. And what they’re looking for is something vital to the Federation’s future.” He smirked. “We call it Cetacean Ops. It’s classified.”

He watched as her face went from confusion to bewilderment and back again. “It’s ...”

He put a finger up to his lips.

She cleared her throat. “Classified, yes sir.”

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