

The Nail

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by [B_Radley](#)

Summary

For want of a nail, there is both pain and joy.

2269

Bethany Blackthorne watches the viewer as her ship pulls from the filigree of the drydock. She had spent three years in this space, turning her *Constitution*-class into something much more than she had been, so much so that she now needed a 'II' after her class name to differentiate between her and her sisters. Including the vaunted *Enterprise*, still considered to be the flagship of the Federation's exploratory fleet, after nearly fifteen years under three different captains.

She smiles to herself. She hadn't done too shabbily herself, with her own five-year mission. They had tried to kick her upstairs, especially after she had started showing during the refit, but she had refused. The most that she had accepted was the promotion to Commodore, the highest rank that she could still maintain direct command of a single ship, while gaining responsibility for the administration of others.

Bethany tries not to think of those other responsibilities. She knows that they won't take up too much of her time. Being responsible for high-performing, low-maintenance captains of Starfleet's First Line class of starships, with the exception of the occasional cat-herding, shouldn't be too hard.

She rolls her eyes at her thoughts. *You do realize that you're speaking of people like Jim Kirk*, she thinks to herself.

The turbolift opens and the primary joy in her life, other than an inanimate lady that is making her way to the warp entry point past Jupiter, runs in. She looks down at the solid three-year old with his father's curly hair and her own fluctuating shade of green eyes. He giggles at her, then turns to look at the stars in wonder. Her yeoman looks at her apologetically; she waves away her concern. When Jamie had been born, the entire crew had adopted him as their own. They had all come to her, one by one when she had been about to push 'send' on her resignation, after she had learned that she was pregnant. They had, as one, told her—*no, begged her*—to stay on the ship. To face whatever came, with her as their captain.

The one who had led most of them to survival.

The head of BUPERs, Samuel Harriman, had fought for her removal, but in the end, the fact that Starfleet was considering developing a program where families would be a part of exploratory ships, at least sometime in the future, had overridden him.

Her classmate and former captain, the admiral overseeing the exploratory fleet, had given the final word to the C-in-C. Nogura Heihachiro had been the loudest voice in her corner.

She notices that Jamie is looking up at her, his face quizzical. He had her name; the only thing he had of his father besides that curly hair was his at-times-gentle disposition.

His demonstrations of stubbornness are all hers.

She is suddenly glad that she had changed the name back from its original Gaelic, a name which, as Nogura had once said, had too many glottal stops and needed a healthy addition of whisky to authentically sound out.

Bethany's heart twists in grief as she remembers what had facilitated Jamie's birth. An intense, lonely battle with the Orion syndicate had sent her ship to the dockyard, half of her saucer section and most of her secondary hull gone.

Along with seventy of her crew. She closes her eyes wondering how she could find joy in the event that sent her ship to the dockyard, along with herself into the arms of the engineer overseeing the first upgrade of a *Constitution*-class starship. In addition to a fellow starship captain at a strategy conference.

She opens her eyes to the laughter on her son's face. The crooked grin, which was his father's other gift, makes her think of the old saying, about the want of a nail and what that want could do.

In this case, it was different. The lack of the nail, in the form of reinforcements, had been costly. But there had been joy from it as well.

The crew of the USS *Yorktown*, mourning their dead, recognized that joy. When they had accepted her son as their own.

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