

## Reserved for Those Willing

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by [LordMcCoveyCove](#)

### Summary

Stardate 3900: Recently promoted Captain Leo Verde assumes command of *Musashi*, a state-of-the-art starship in its final stages of construction at Utopia Planitia Fleet Yards. While awaiting its completion, Leo navigates the challenges of leading a pre-commissioning crew while building trust with officers, some carrying the weight of complicated pasts. Each day tests his ability to balance the demands of Starfleet and family politics, crew dynamics, and the looming responsibility of bringing *Musashi* into active service. As the pressure mounts, Leo must prove he's capable of steering his new command through both the unfinished ship and the ghosts of his own past.

### Notes

Historian's Note: This short takes place around four months after the [Starship Reykjavik/First Duty](#) crossover novel, "[Conduct Unbecoming](#)."

# Chapter 1

NCC-3347/05 (Shuttle *Sassen*)

Approaching Utopia Planitia Construction Yard Eleven, full impulse power.

October 3, 2322 (Stardate 3900)

Cockpit

As Lieutenant (jg) Kimberly Timm skillfully guided the shuttle from Utopia Planitia's main facility, Captain Leo Verde cast a sidelong glance at her, knowing she would safely take him to his new command, the starship *Musashi*. When he arrived at the station, he sought out a shuttle heading in the same direction and encountered Timm, who was in the process of loading equipment and parts for the construction teams working on the final weeks before the project's completion.

Upon seeing him, she greeted him with a wide smile and addressed him as "Captain." He wore his typical traveling outfit of a brown civilian jacket, a blue undershirt, and black slacks. The man's smile as it peeked out from behind a full beard, she recalled vividly from their time on *Repulse*.

Leo moved across the landing bay's deck; careful to navigate around the marked sections designated for craft landing. The facility's busy nature demanded caution and alertness. "*Lieutenant* Timm. Congratulations on your promotion."

Timm accepted Leo's offered hand and shook it. "Thank you, sir. Congratulations to you, too. On the new ship."

"Well, they were foolish enough to offer..." Leo replied, a mild blush forming upon his cheeks.

She dismissed his modesty with a wave of her hand. "Bullshit. You're the right person for the job."

Taken aback by her brash remark, Leo could not help but chuckle. "We'll find out."

With a chuck of her thumb, she asked, "Need a lift?"

Once confirmed, a quick liftoff and a full impulse launch from the station's outer marker pushed Leo into the back of his seat as the gravity systems lagged in response to Timm's expert maneuvering. As they approached the yard, he could make out the shape of the ship within, with its catamaran-style hull design.

"Yard One-One Control to craft at vector Sierra-Echo-One-Niner," called a toneless masculine tenor voice from the cockpit speakers. "Your trajectory shows you will enter our outer marker. Confirm identify as Three-three-four-seven-stroke-zero-five."

Timm replied in the expected pattern, "One-One Control, Three-three-four-seven-stroke-zero-five is confirmed. We will enter vector Sierra-Echo-One-Niner in sixty seconds. Our flight plan is filed for direct approach and landing is on file."

"Thank you, *Sassen*. Need your clearance code."

She tapped in the requested code and transmitted on the channel. "Fulfilling supplement order Mike-one-three-seven. Oh, and am carrying *Musashi-One*."

A pregnant pause punctuated Control's response. "Sorry, *Sassen*. Say your last again?"

Timm repeated her words about the order fulfillment, then took a beat before adding, "And I'm carrying *Musashi-One*. Code Six."

The flat tone replied, this time with more formality. "Uh, Code Six, confirmed. Welcome to Yard One-One, Captain Verde."

Leo smiled. He leaned forward out of habit before speaking. "Verde, here. Thank you for the warm welcome, Control."

"*Sassen*, you are now in the pattern. Upon leaving adjust heading for DAL vector Sierra-Echo-Zero-Four. Approach is hands-on, repeat, hands-on."

She confirmed the Direct Approach and Landing vector by repeating the information back to Control, as every word spoken ended up in the record. Then, she finished with, "Hands-on approach acknowledged, Control. Thank you. *Sassen*, out."

"Hands-on?" Leo asked. "I guess the automatics are off?"

"Main bay. Tractor beam is down. System failure," Timm explained in her typical telegraph style of speaking. She gestured to their cargo in the compartment aft. "Replacement parts are back there."

"I see," he said as he glanced back for a moment. "Well, there's plenty of time before we launch. Do you know who from the PCU has arrived?"

She nodded once. With her right hand, she adjusted the heading for the direct approach vector. "ChEng," she said, counting off with her fingers. "MARDET CO. Lots of NCOs. Lots of crew. Everyone's eager."

Leo considered that information. With the arrival of the new chief engineer and marine detachment commander, things would be looking up for him. As they closed in along *Musashi*'s saucer, he asked Timm, "Would it be possible to do a quick orbit so I can get a closer look at my ship?"

With a smirk, Timm said. "You're the boss." She keyed open the comms and called, "One-One Control, *Sassen*. Requesting deviation from

approach for inspection pass on *Musashi-One*'s request."

A voice different than before replied; full of humor. "*Sassen*, Control. Deviation approved for inspection pass. Whatever the Captain wants."

Leo and Timm shared a laugh over comms before she replied. "Control, *Sassen*. Adjusting for deviated course. Captain sends his respects."

Control signed off the channel with a simple, "Enjoy the view, Captain. She's a real beauty. Control, out."

## Chapter 2

*Sassen* settled gracefully onto *Musashi*'s primary flight deck; its landing gear engaging with a gentle thud as it transferred its full weight to the ship's deck plates. The almost-imperceptible sound of the touchdown could be heard by those standing nearby, a subtle reminder of the shuttle's impressive mass and the skill required to maneuver it.

Lieutenant Guilla Vazen stepped within view of *Sassen*'s nose, with folded arms. She shook her head as she made eye contact with Timm through the tinted transparent aluminum. "You fucking bitch," she mouthed with a playful smirk.

With widened eyes, Timm tilted her head toward her passenger, as though to warn her fellow pilot.

Vazen glanced to the cockpit's right side and caught Leo Verde's amused expression.

"Oh, shit," she spat, breaking off contact to admire the deck.



"Good to see Vazen made it," Leo said as she watched her sound the alarm. "Anyone else from *Repulse*?"

Timm locked down the shuttle after completing her post-landing checklist. "Oh, sure." Without waiting for another word, she left him in the cockpit once she lowered the large aft egress door. As soon as the edge touched the deck, a flurry of personnel boarded to begin off-loading the much-needed gear.

He grabbed his duffel bag and slung it over his left shoulder.

To avoid impeding the bustling work crews, Leo used the starboard hatch of the shuttle. Carefully stepping down from the shuttle, he looked around, expecting an officer to greet him, but found none. Vazen apparently found other duties to perform. The absence didn't faze him; it was typical of the organized chaos that characterized a starship under construction. He shrugged it off and made his way into the corridor.

"Okay, this is... deck nine," Leo murmured, reading the nearest junction marking. He nodded to himself, orienting quickly. "The lift should be down that way." With the assured stride of someone accustomed to starship layouts, he navigated the corridor towards the port side, spotting the lift doors ahead. He waited for the next car, and when the doors parted to reveal an empty interior, he stepped inside, feeling a fleeting sense of solitude amidst the construction noise.

"Captain's quarters," he commanded, his voice echoing in the confined space as the bare bulkheads did nothing for sound mitigation. The lift moved seamlessly into motion, ascending to accommodate his request. In moments, the doors opened onto the aft section of deck two, where the captain's quarters awaited him just a short walk down the corridor. As he approached compartment 2A08, nestled beneath the main bridge, he felt a familiar twinge of anticipation mixed with the weight of responsibility that came with this new command.

Leo tapped the access panel beside the hatch, and the door slid open with a soft hiss. Stepping inside, he took in the stateroom's unique layout, shaped by the slanted overhead that mirrored the underside of the bridge deck above. Protective coverings draped over the installed furniture, hinting at the room's potential beneath the layers of plastic. Despite the coverings, he could already perceive the spaciousness of the Matsumoto-class ship, similar in size to an *Excelsior*.

"This is bigger than my quarters on the *Crazy Eight*," he remarked, the words hanging in the air as he pivoted in place, taking in the full three-hundred and sixty degrees of his assigned living space. The stateroom had a subtle grandeur, still raw and unfinished, yet already felt like his own. He appreciated the thoughtfulness in the design, from the broad viewports to the well-planned layout that offered both comfort and functionality—a quiet promise of the life that awaited him as the ship's captain.

The slanted overhead featured three expansive viewports, which overlooked a spacious central sub-compartment and offered a stunning panorama of the aft quarter; including the auxiliary craft landing path to the main doors of the flight deck seven decks below. The room had a wide desk, a high-backed chair, ample seating, and suitable tables for hosting small gatherings or receptions. Leo moved through the quarters, orienting himself and seeking the essentials. He discovered the bunk area, dominated by a queen-sized bed that promised a touch of comfort amidst the starship's ongoing construction. Next to it, a private head offered a rare sense of solitude. On the opposite side, he noted access to a compact dining room, positioned to take advantage of one of the angled viewports, creating a cozy yet commanding space for meals with a view.

Leo set his duffel atop the bed, hearing the protective covering move underneath its weight. Opening it, he removed his uniforms and hung them in the provided wardrobe. The maroon jacket carried upon it the various accouterments earned through his years of service. On the shoulder sat the rank insignia of a captain; the device gifted to him by the crew of *Repulse* earlier that year.

After a brief consideration of walking the decks in civilian attire, Leo quickly dismissed the idea. He didn't want to draw unnecessary attention from the security teams or distract the engineers already focused on their work. Instead, he stripped off his jacket, shirt, and slacks, replacing them with the standard departmental white turtleneck, the bomber jacket, and uniform trousers.

Now in attire that showed his authorization, he departed the stateroom for the corridor in order to start his self-guided tour with the bridge.

## Chapter 3

Starfleet's Bureau of Ships (BuShips) appointed a supervisory officer for every starship construction project to ensure the efforts of thousands met the expectations and responsibility of the task. This officer, known as the Supervisor of Shipbuilding (SupShip), oversaw the work from the first plank of tritanium laid to the smash of a champagne bottle against the completed hull during the commissioning ceremony. Before a vessel received its commissioning orders, it was merely a hull under a naval construction contract, authorized by the Federation Council and executed by the Ministry of Defense and Starfleet.

For Naval Construction Contract #3347, that responsibility fell to Commander Skansh, a Tellarite officer with over seventeen years of expertise in starship construction. Despite his rank, Skansh preferred wearing the working uniform: a maroon and black jumpsuit, practical for the job. His white-tabbed shoulders bore smaller rank insignia, a quiet nod to his position without unnecessary pomp.

Skansh took great pride in his spotless track record, with each of his projects completed on schedule and to the highest standards. The Bureau's admiral had decorated him several times for his exceptional work, including his contributions to *Georgiou*, *Hathaway*, and *Reykjavik* builds. *Musashi* marked his third assignment as SupShip, and as with his past work, every millimeter of the vessel had already become as familiar to him as the edges of his tusks.

During his first three years at the Bureau he started his career as a team lead. He'd been more hands on as an engineer; always carrying a tool belt and lending his expertise wherever he could. With each successive promotion, those opportunities dwindled, giving way to a routine dominated by reports, meetings, and yard workers bringing specific issues to his attention.

Each day, for one hour, he sought solace in the partially furnished ready room just off the starboard side of the main bridge. Once the compartment became environmentally viable, he had requested a desk and two chairs. Since the ship's permanent commanding officer hadn't yet been assigned, he claimed the space as the senior officer on deck, driven by a deep sense of responsibility and ownership.

It was during that hour each day that Skansh first crossed paths with the newly assigned captain of the pre-commissioning unit, Leo Verde.

The ready room doors slid open without warning, prompting both men to exchange surprised glances.

"Oh, apologies. I didn't realize anyone was using this space," Leo said with an awkward smile.

Skansh, recognizing the rank on the bomber jacket, rose to his feet. "Captain... Verde?"

Stepping forward, Leo extended his hand. "Yes, that's me. But please, call me Leo."

The Tellarite took an immediate liking to Leo, impressed by the man's casual warmth. Over the years, Skansh had learned to trust his instincts, sharpened by countless interactions with starship captains. Some captains wore their rank like a rigid badge of entitlement, quietly demanding deference as they prepared to take command. Others, however, led with respect and trust from the start, earning loyalty through their actions rather than demanding it by default.

Leo, in just thirty seconds of conversation, had firmly placed himself in the latter category.

Skansh stood from the chair behind the desk. "The apology should be mine, Captain. This is your office, after all."

Leo waved off the formality with a smile, raising his hands. "No need for that. Between the two of us, I'm pretty sure your workday requires the ready room more than mine. Please, keep your seat, Commander."

"Skansh," the Tellarite offered with a nod. "Please, call me Skansh." He eased back into the chair as Leo had suggested, gesturing toward the seat across from him.

Leo smiled and took the offered chair. "Thank you."

"If I'd known you were arriving today, Captain, I would have arranged a proper tour of our progress," Skansh remarked, his tone half-apologetic, half-pragmatic.

"Not at all," Leo replied with a casual wave of his hand. "I requested a Code Six." By invoking Code Six, he had ensured his arrival would be without any formalities or ceremony.

Skansh gave a slow, approving nod. "I appreciate that, Leo."

"No problem," Leo said with a grin. "I know how valuable every minute is when you're building a ship." He leaned back slightly. "Besides, it gave me a chance to stroll through some of the finished sections."

He snorted lightly. "It's not often a captain shows up months before the ship's even done."

"That may be," Leo replied with a chuckle, "but I wanted the chance to get to know the ship while she's still coming together. I promise I'll stay out from underfoot and not interfere with your teams."

Skansh shook his head slightly. "No need to worry about that. I'll copy you on the reports so you can get a head start on familiarizing yourself. Have you ever been aboard a Matsumoto-class before?"

"I have," Leo nodded. "Two of my Academy classmates command the *Yukikaze* and *Arcadia*."

"Captain Toland and Captain Locke," Skansh noted, recalling the names easily. "I didn't work on either, though. This is, however, my second

Matsumoto-class.”

“Then I know we’re in good hands,” Leo said with a warm smile.

## Chapter 4

By the morning of the sixth day, Leo had settled into a comfortable routine after moving into the captain's stateroom. Each day at oh-six-hundred, he slipped on his bomber jacket and headed to the mess hall for breakfast. Although all the replicators were fully operational and capable of feeding the busy crew around the clock, Leo preferred this early hour, right during the shift changeover—when the night crews were finishing up and the day crews were gearing up for the day ahead. It gave him a chance to interact with a wide variety of personnel—officers, non-comms, enlisted crew members, and civilian specialists—who were putting in the hard work to get his ship ready.

The effect was palpable. Morale noticeably improved as word spread that the captain regularly ate with the crew. Those who shared a table with him found it easy to talk, joke, and connect with the high-ranking officer, making the idea of a "captain" seem far less distant. Productivity followed suit, something Skansh casually pointed out during one of their shared hours in the ready room.

"They work hard," Leo had said with a grin. "If I can lift their spirits with a joke or two, then I'm getting a real bargain."

On the fifth day after his arrival, the construction teams began quietly prioritizing work on the captain's quarters. One afternoon, after an unofficial walkabout inspection, Leo returned to find the captain's areas outfitted with all the missing components—a gleaming new viewscreen installed for personal use and an elegant set of dining furniture in his private mess, the kind that whispered luxury and comfort.

The small, thoughtful gestures from the crew—subtle signs of admiration—only deepened Leo's sense that he was the beneficiary of an ongoing, drawn-out housewarming. It created a comfortable atmosphere, even if it felt somewhat unearned so early in his command.

Unfortunately, the first call received on his newly installed viewscreen didn't follow that same warm tone.

The stern, unyielding face of Admiral Reynaldo Tomas "Rey" Verde (ret.) filled the screen, his expression hardening after the brief exchange of pleasantries. What began as a conversation marked by the cool familiarity of family quickly turned to outright displeasure as they broached the subject of Leo's choice for executive officer.

"You cannot be serious," Admiral Verde rumbled, his voice dropping to a low, menacing bass. His Spanish accent lent weight to the scolding. "*Lito*, you've earned the right to select from Starfleet's finest. And you've chosen... an officer with a dubious record?"

As the familiar cadence of his father's words filled the air, Leo felt himself slipping back to his childhood, a time when every misstep was met with that same condescending tone. His father had perfected this brand of reprimand—laced with just enough patronization to sting but masked in a veneer of parental concern.

"Sir," Leo began, his voice calm but firm, adhering to the old habit of addressing his father by his rank, "as you've said, I've earned the privilege. Isn't it my decision to make?"

"Yes," Admiral Verde shot back, his tone clipped, "but I believe you're squandering that privilege. I could recommend several more deserving officers—officers with impeccable records—for your first command. Don't let sentiment blind you to the responsibilities of a captain. You need an exceptional executive officer at your side."

Leo's lips twitched into a faint smirk. "Was it not sentimentality that led you to appoint your former XO to command *Victory* after you received your first star?"

The frown that deepened across his father's face could have curdled milk. "You weren't there. And don't presume to lecture me about command when you've barely grasped what it means to lead in the real fleet."

"The 'real fleet?'" Leo echoed, tilting his head slightly, a mix of curiosity and irritation creeping into his tone. "What does that even mean?"

"It means," Verde said, his voice hardening, "you're no longer in the fringes of the Border Service, nor are you playing attorney in the JAG Corps. You're about to take command of a proper starship under the watchful eye of a prestigious flag officer. And make no mistake, *they* will judge you based on the officers you choose to surround yourself with. If your choices fall short, they'll remember. And so will others. That reputation will reflect not just on you, but on your family."

Leo's expression darkened, his mouth twisting with a bitterness he couldn't fully suppress. "By 'family,' you mean you and Mamá," he said flatly. "This is all about your reputation, isn't it? Your ego."

Verde's voice dropped to a near-snarl, barely containing his anger. "You are part of something bigger than yourself, *Captain!* I would've hoped that by now, after all you've been through, you'd understand that. The mistakes you've made—letting sentimentality and idealism cloud your judgment—should've taught you the consequences. This is about duty, *Lito*. To Starfleet, to yourself, and yes, to your family."

Leo crossed his arms, unconvinced by his father's strained rationale. Years of practicing law had sharpened his ability to spot a weak argument. "I hear your words, Papá, but I don't feel your conviction. You weren't there on *Repulse*. You didn't serve with officers who were left stranded under a tyrant like Keller. You can't know what they endured."

His father's voice rose, his frustration slipping through the cracks. "I don't *have* to be there to know the weight of command! And I've worked with nearly every flag officer in the fleet. I know exactly how they'll react to you picking an officer every other captain in Starfleet has written off."

Leo stepped forward, his stance unyielding. "I am *not* every other captain. I am a Verde." He leaned in, voice firm but calm as he quoted, "I lead by example. I don't substitute my judgment for others' opinions."

Admiral Verde flinched, momentarily thrown off balance by the words he himself had spoken years ago in defense of his actions at the Battle

of Chenoweth—a battle that cost over a thousand lives and ten ships but earned him a decisive victory. Composing himself, Verde straightened, his eyes narrowing in a cold acknowledgment. "Very well, *Captain Verde*. Your message is clear. I trust mine is as well."

Leo's voice softened, but his resolve remained. "Loud and clear, *Admiral Verde*."

The admiral's expression shifted ever so slightly, a trace of pride sneaking through his steely demeanor, a small curl lifting the corner of his mouth. With a shift in tone, he asked, "Do you still have that phaser I sent you?"



## Chapter 5

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Two weeks after Leo's arrival, Lieutenant Guilla Vazen walked alongside Lieutenant (jg) Timm on *Musashi's* flight deck. Every day for the past five weeks, both pilots happily worked long hours ferrying parts, equipment, and personnel from various locations back to the ship. The pair were among the first to request transfers to the pre-commissioning unit upon Timm hearing that Leo Verde would command the ship.

Before then, along with most the survivors from *Repulse*, they were pressed into service as shuttle pilots on Spacedock, in orbit of Earth. Adding to the general malaise of an uncertain future, they suffered through nearly four months of the most agonizingly boring flights to and from Earth and Luna before all of them were cleared by Starfleet to seek other berths. At that point, they understood that both the Keller and T'Rel courts-martial found their respective conclusions.

Having become friends in the pilots' ready room on *Repulse*, and working together as a team to survive a harrowing escape from the ship with refugees aboard, Vazen and Timm resolved to find a new home where they could continue their professional relationship. This narrowed down the list of suitable billets to only a handful in dire need of skilled officers with a significant number of flight hours under their belts.

One morning while browsing the latest openings, an announcement caught Timm's attention:

#### Urgent Need for Auxiliary Craft Pilots

The Pre-Commissioning Unit (PCU) *Musashi*, NCC-3347, is currently seeking qualified Auxiliary Craft Pilots for immediate assignment to the newly formed Flight Department. *Musashi* is a Matsumoto-class multimission command cruiser in the final phase of construction at Utopia Planitia Fleet Yards, with an expected commissioning in the near future. This billet represents a critical need as the *Musashi* prepares for its first deployment under the command of Captain R. E. Verde, expected to depart on or around Stardate 4125.

Ideal candidates must possess experience in auxiliary craft operations and flight coordination in both routine and high-tempo environments. Applicants should be fully qualified and hold the appropriate certifications for small craft piloting, including shuttlecraft and combat-ready auxiliary craft for marine operations.

This is an exceptional opportunity to serve aboard a state-of-the-art vessel and play an essential role in its operational readiness.

Interested officers are encouraged to submit their applications immediately through the Bureau of Personnel for expedited consideration.

Within an hour of reading, both sent in their applications to the Bureau of Personnel.

They received their transfer orders twenty-four hours later.

Twenty minutes after that, they boarded a shuttle for Mars.



"Morning, Captain," greeted Major Teme Sh'vaares, *Musashi's* Andorian marine detachment commander. She straightened slightly in her seat within the wardroom on deck three, her posture as sharp as the insignia of a proper major gleaming on her 'monster midnight' uniform.

"Morning, Major," Leo responded with a grin, making his way toward the bank of replicators. Just as he approached, a steward deftly stepped into his path.

"Excuse me, sir. If you'll allow, my staff and I can take your order," said Master Chief Steward Brodd, his sky blue departmental tabs contrasting against the black-and-white steward's uniform. "How about a coffee to start?"

Momentarily thrown by the sudden attention—service that hadn't existed just yesterday—Leo paused before responding, "Hot cocoa, please."

"Coming right up, Captain," Brodd replied smoothly, already moving to fulfill the request.

Leo took a seat across from Sh'vaares, his gaze following the Bolian steward as he busily prepared the drink. "Is he new?" he asked, eyeing Brodd with mild curiosity as another steward slid a PADD displaying the breakfast menu in front of him.

Teme lifted her mug of strong *raktajino*, smirking as she took a sip. "A whole crew of stewards arrived on this morning's flight. Brodd's our new chief steward." She raised her voice just slightly as Brodd approached once more, grinning ear to ear.

"Indeed, I am, Major," Brodd confirmed as he set the cocoa down in front of Leo with a practiced grace. "Very pleased to make your acquaintance."

Leo leaned in, inhaling the rich aroma wafting from the mug. His eyes briefly fluttered shut in appreciation. "That's incredible, Master Chief. Delighted to make yours, as well." He took a careful sip of the hot liquid and smiled. "Tastes as good as it smells."

The Bolian offered a humble bow. "Please call me Brodd, sir. I'm glad you like it. Consider it a small gift... from a mutual friend."

"Mutual friend?" Leo raised a brow.

"Yes, sir. I come by way of the flagship *Farragut*. Spent the last three years on Admiral Essa's staff."

Leo's eyes widened at the revelation. "Ah, well, in that case... welcome aboard, Brodd. I will let Neema know you arrived safely."

Brodd's grin widened. "Much appreciated, sir. Now, may I offer you some breakfast to go with that cocoa?"

After ordering eggs benedict, Leo found himself alone with Major Sh'vaares once again. The Andorian marine chuckled, her antennae twitching in amusement. "You're on a first-name basis with the commanding admiral of Task Force Seventeen?"

Leo blushed slightly and let out a soft chuckle. "Uh... it's a long story."

Sh'vaares raised an eyebrow, her curiosity piqued, but she recognized her captain's subtle reluctance. "Fair enough," she replied, noting that he wasn't inclined to elaborate — at least, not in this setting. She was just about to change the subject when the wardroom doors parted, admitting a new face, this one wearing the insignia of a full commander on his bomber jacket.

"Captain Leo Verde," came a familiar Irish-lilted voice, thick with amusement. "How the hell are you, sir?"

Leo shot up from his seat, a wide grin spreading across his face. "Callum! You made it!"

Callum O'Brien let out a sharp, staccato laugh. "You called, I ran. All right?"

"I'm all right," Leo said, giving him a hearty pat on the back. "Let me introduce you. Major Sh'vaares, this is Commander Callum O'Brien, our new chief engineer. And Major Sh'vaares is the CO of our marine detachment — also known as the Bushido Battalion."

O'Brien extended his hand to Sh'vaares, his Irish lilt warm and friendly. "A pleasure, Major. I think this is my first time serving with a proper marine unit."

Sh'vaares clasped his hand firmly, her grin sharpening at the edges. "Well, I promise not to piss in your sacred potted plants, Commander."

Her tone turned noticeably cooler, and Leo quickly stepped in, casting a glance at his engineer. "I don't think Callum meant anything by that, Major. He's got a healthy respect for the Corps. Don't you, Callum?"

O'Brien nodded quickly, his grin fading. "Of course, Major. I meant no disrespect. Sometimes the accent makes me sound more trite than I mean to."

She eased her posture, though her eyes still held a wary edge. "Perhaps. But I take protecting my marines seriously."

Leo stepped in smoothly, his tone warm but firm. "Our marines, Major."

Sh'vaares dipped her head, conceding. "Yes, sir." She knew well that her captain had a history of working alongside marines, and that respect had to be mutual.

Sensing the tension, Leo shifted his weight. "Well, I should head upstairs and get the daily report from Skansh."

O'Brien perked up, clearly eager to move past the awkwardness. "The SupShip? Mind if I tag along? Got a few questions for him."

Leo smiled, nodding. "I'm sure he'd be delighted to meet you, Callum. Major, until next time."



Once inside the lift, O'Brien quipped dryly, "She's a bundle of warmth, isn't she?"

Leo smirked. "It's her first fleet detachment. She's spent her entire career in the comfortable confines of marine barracks. The few times she's worked with fleet officers haven't been exactly... ideal. So, she's got her guard up. Sometimes overdoes it on the defense, but don't take it personally."

O'Brien nodded, thoughtful. "Got it. Funny, my dealings with marines have been the opposite. Always cheery, couldn't shake them off."

The lift doors slid open, revealing the unfinished bridge. Leo stepped out and replied, "Lucky you. My first year on *Decker* was all about proving I wasn't some candy-assed lieutenant."

O'Brien's brow furrowed. "What brought that on?"

"I was assistant Ops but wanted to join in on hot boardings. I had to train with the marines until I got my quals. They didn't make it easy."

As they walked across the bridge, heading toward the ready room, Leo added with a grin, "Morning, Skansh. I've brought you a special guest today."

Already on his feet, the diminutive Skansh glanced up from his PADD with a grin. "Ah, I see that, Leo. Well, hello, Callum."

Leo's brow lifted as he looked between the two. "Wait— you two know each other?"

"Callum worked under me almost nine years ago," Skansh replied, stepping forward to shake O'Brien's hand. "Good to see you again, Commander."

O'Brien flashed a wide grin. "I was on his team for a year when we built *Fearless*," he explained to Leo. "Didn't realize Skansh was SupShip until you mentioned it earlier. Had to come say hello."

Skansh tilted his head slightly. "You just got in?"

O'Brien nodded. "Yeah, Vazen ferried me over not more than thirty minutes ago."

Leo slid into the open chair behind the desk, content to let Skansh and O'Brien catch up. He leaned back slightly, enjoying the easy flow of conversation between two officers who had clearly developed a solid rapport over their shared time working together. Their banter brought back memories of his own service with close colleagues: the years spent alongside R'raia on *Decker*, long conversations with Grax aboard *Hansen*, and the countless shared missions with Keena Val on both ships.

Now, his friends were scattered across the fleet. Commander R'raia had earned her own starship, *Airam*. Lieutenant Commander Grax was still holding the XO post on *Decker*. And Keena Val, now a captain, had taken the helm of *Helios*, an *Excelsior*-class vessel assigned to the Galaxy Exploration Command. The thought of serving with any of them again was tempting, but duty had pulled them in different directions.

As the two engineers eventually took their seats in front of him, the conversation shifted to business. Skansh efficiently ran through the latest updates, briefing both Leo and O'Brien. By the time he wrapped up, most of their scheduled hour had already slipped away.

"You've got everything under control, as usual," O'Brien remarked, a satisfied grin on his face. "Not that I expected anything less."

Skansh chuckled, the sound gruff but good-natured. "Always nice to hear my work is appreciated." He rose from his seat, heading for the exit, but stopped just short of the door. "Oh, I nearly forgot." He turned back, his hoof-like fingers tapping at his PADD. "A friend of mine in Starfleet Heraldry mentioned they finalized the design for the commissioning plaque. Figured you might want to take a look at what they came up with for the ship's plaque and motto."

Leo's terminal chimed with an incoming message. He scanned the screen quickly, his smile widening. "Looks like they got it right. Given the *Musashi's* legacy, I'd say it's a perfect fit." With a flick of his wrist, Leo spun the terminal around to give O'Brien a view of the display:



"Spot on," O'Brien remarked with a grin. "I prefer 'em short and to the point. No need for an epic saga."

Skansh snorted, amused. "Figured you'd appreciate that."

Leo, almost to himself, muttered, "My father would like it, too." Then louder, he added, "Pass along my thanks, would you?"

"Consider it done." Skansh nodded, turning on his heel and heading for the exit. "Catch you both later," the Tellarite called over his shoulder as he stepped through the door and back onto the bridge.

## Chapter End Notes

Click on the plaque for a larger version. The names on the plaque are mostly Star Trek Online technical staff and producers I've had the pleasure of meeting over the years, along with those who contributed to the amazing artwork for the shows themselves.

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