

## Your Service Honors Us

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### Summary

Stardate 3971.84: With a mere two months left before *Musashi's* construction is completed, the new executive officer arrives to report for duty.

### Notes

Historian's Note: This short takes place two weeks after the end of "[Reserved for Those Willing](#)."

NCC-3347 (PCU *Musashi*)

Utopia Planitia Fleet Yards, Construction Yard 11

November 1, 2322 (Stardate 3971.84)

Captain's Ready Room

Commander Skansh, the Supervisor of Shipbuilding (SupShip) assigned to Naval Construction Contract #3347, peered down at the PADD in his hoof-like hands. He sat back in one of two rather comfortable visitor's seat before the desk of Captain Leo Verde, whose fingers made flicking motions across the input panel controlling his larger desktop terminal.

Each motion changed the status report presented on the screen.

The two officers sat in their usual companionable silence, sharing the workspace to tackle any issues that arose on the spot. Skansh valued these moments, enjoying the rare chance for quiet reflection instead of constantly fielding a barrage of calls from the many teams working on the unfinished starship.

When Leo offered the time each day to the Tellarite engineer to give him that refuge each morning, Skansh jumped at the opportunity and appreciated the hour.

That morning, however, Leo broke the silence with a comment: "Last night's environmental-"

"I saw that," Skansh said quickly. "It's limited to deck twelve, section Baker-Four. They've already removed the emitters for diagnostics to track down the problem. Should be ready by tomorrow morning."

Leo said, "Good. And what about the secondary injectors-?"

"Repaired and in the middle of safety testing," the curt reply spoke over him once more. "Your chief engineer is chest-deep into that issue as well."

"He was admittedly getting bored cooling his heels," the captain said with a sidelong grin on his lips. "What about the aux-"

Skansh said, "The remaining units will arrive next Tuesday."

"So, I'm just way behind in my reading?" asked Leo.

"Well behind. But, that's why you're not SupShip and *merely* a starship captain. I'm lucky that you can actually *read*." Skansh stressed certain words as he spoke, glaring at Leo with deliberation.

As the intercom signaled to grab his attention, Leo told him in the mildest form of Civil Conversation, "Let's trade places and you can show me how it's really done." His words were tinged with a mocking tone as he spoke pointedly toward his new friend.

Skansh bared all of his teeth in a wide smile, appreciative of Leo's respect for his culture. Gruffly, he replied, "I'd rather not. Babysitting is not my strong suit. I'd prefer to work with *true* professionals."

Leo laughed as the intercom beeped insistently. He tapped the panel and said, "Verde, here."

"Sir, this is Lieutenant Carstairs," said the contralto feminine voice. "You wish to be notified when senior staff arrived."

"Thank you, Lieutenant. Who's here?"

"The Executive Officer has just landed on the flight deck."

After sharing a quick glance with Skansh, Leo drew in a slow breath before responding, "Very well. Welcome the commander aboard. Please have her check in to quarters, first, and then come see me in the ready room."

Carstairs replied, "Aye, aye, sir."

"Thank you. Verde, out."

Skansh changed his tone, showing that their short divergence into Civil ended. "So..."

"Yeah," Leo replied with a sigh. "This meeting should be really interesting."



The Chief Engineering Officer of PCU *Musashi*, Commander Callum O'Brien, stood before the door of Senior Officer Stateroom 7F12, his finger hovering over the annunciator panel. Around him, various uniformed personnel moved quickly in both directions as they saw to their tasks. He pressed the tip of his finger to the panel and waited, counting the seconds. When there was no answer, he jabbed the panel again, more insistently this time. "I know you're in there," he called out, his voice carrying a light Irish lilt that softened the edge of his words.

After a moment, the door slid open to reveal Commander T'Rel, her sharp brown eyes locking onto her unexpected visitor. "Commander O'Brien," she greeted him, her tone even and composed. "It is agreeable to see you once more."

"Agreeable,' is it?" O'Brien stepped inside, barely pausing as he moved past T'Rel, his old colleague from *Repulse*. "You know you had me worried, right? You left without so much as a 'goodbye!'"

T'Rel's gaze followed him, the door sliding shut with a soft hiss. "From my experience serving with humans, partings are often best handled with minimal words," she said, her voice as calm and steady as ever. "However, if I have caused offense, then I offer my apologies."

"Ah, shove your apologies!" O'Brien snapped, his voice laced with frustration. His accent thickened as he wagged an admonishing finger in her direction. "And don't be hiding behind your logic now. We've served together for three years, and I'd like to think you know by now that there's more than a few people who care about you, whether you see it that way or not."

T'Rel clasped her hands neatly at the small of her back, her eyes closing briefly as she dipped her head slightly. "I apologize, regardless."

O'Brien sucked in a breath through clenched teeth, his vexation barely contained. "You're missing the point! If it wasn't for Leo, no one would've even known you tried to resign your commission. You'd just walk away and leave us all in the lurch."

She spoke in her usual measured tone, "Given the circumstances of my service aboard *Repulse*, it appeared the most logical course of action. Despite my acquittal, the very nature of those charges has left an indelible mark, rendering me unfit for space duty."

O'Brien let out a long sigh, unable to dispute her blunt assessment. Starfleet, as he well knew, thrived on whispers and innuendo. "Well, thank God for Leo, then."

"Indeed," T'Rel acknowledged. "I owe him a considerable debt for extending this billet to me, despite my record."

He tilted his head, curiosity piqued. "Have you met with him yet?"

"No, not yet. The officer of the deck relayed Captain Verde's instructions to locate my assigned quarters before reporting to the ready room." She motioned subtly to the neatly arranged stateroom around her. "Having already stowed my belongings, the ready room is my next destination."

O'Brien softened his tone, letting a touch of warmth slip through. "Would you like me to come with you?"

T'Rel glanced at him, a hint of curiosity flickering behind her composed demeanor. "I appreciate the offer, but presenting myself for duty with an escort may be deemed overly informal."

He chuckled softly, shaking his head. "Then, I'll come along." Seeing her raise an eyebrow in mild surprise, he added, "If there's any captain in Starfleet who values a bit of informality, it's Leo Verde."

She considered his words for a moment before offering a small, conceding shrug. "As you wish." She stepped aside, allowing O'Brien to take the lead, and together they exited the stateroom into the busy corridor, their footsteps echoing softly as they walked side by side.



Commander Skansh exited the ready room and stepped out onto the bridge just as Commanders O'Brien and T'Rel arrived from the turbolift at the rear of the bridge.

"Skansh," O'Brien called out of necessity. The human approached him in quick step fashion. "I need you to put in another supplementary order."

A snort sharply departed the Tellerite's snout. "Of *course* you do. Let me guess-

"Wait one," O'Brien said to him. He turned to the waiting Vulcan next to him and said, "T'Rel, I'll meet you inside, I have to take care of this, first."

She nodded wordlessly as she passed by them.

"Go right in, XO," Skansh said. "He's expecting you."

The Vulcan stalled momentarily after being called "XO," then proceeded through the doors inside.

"Commander T'Rel, reporting for duty, Captain," she said after stepping forward and standing before Leo's desk at attention.

The moment that T'Rel entered the room, Leo gave her his full attention as he remained seated behind his desk. "T'Rel! Welcome aboard. I trust you had no difficulty in reaching the ship?"

"Thank you, Captain," she replied. "I experienced no difficulties during transit."

He grinned. "Short trip considering you were coming from Spacedock, right?"

"Indeed."

He rose from his seat and walked around to the front of the desk. Taking the seat to her left, he gestured for her to take the other chair. "You have questions, I'm sure."

T'Rel scrutinized Leo briefly after she sat down. "As a matter of fact, I do."

"I intend to make myself available to you until you're satisfied," Leo promised. "And, for the moment, let us drop all formalities of rank. Call me Leo."

She cleared her throat. "When I contacted you for legal representation, you declined. May I ask why?"

Leo's grin dimmed slightly. "You may ask."

T'Rel's lips formed a thin line in response. "That was a joke."

"Yes," he confirmed with a smirk. In a more serious tone, he commented, "It was my understanding that Commander Ross did a brilliant job of obtaining the result you desired out of the court-martial."

"He did, and this is not a negative endorsement of his ability-"

"But, you expected I would represent you."

She nodded. "I did."

Though her tone carried the characteristically flat Vulcan voice, Leo felt as though he could almost hear her disappointment. He sighed deeply before explaining, "I know I had said I wanted to represent both you and Keller. But when I spoke with Janeera- Captain Ch'charhat- she had a recommendation from Admiral Devereaux that-

"-It would be improper for you to act as legal counsel?" she finished the statement for him.

"Well," he hesitated, "there were several reasons preventing me, and I apologize for not making that clear. The first is that it was a conflict of interest for me to do so. I was technically there to arrest you both and with our investigations, develop evidence to prosecute you.

"The second reason is that when I assumed command of *Repulse* and reinstated you as XO, I technically inserted myself into your chain of command. I could hardly execute my role as an officer of the court if I proceeded from a biased position or even perceived to be biased as your advocate."

T'Rel nodded. "That is reasonable. I apologize for assuming otherwise."

Leo shook his head. "No apologies necessary. We have had no opportunity to discuss this before now. I can hardly fault you for drawing your own conclusions." He added, "I felt the best I could do was reach out to another attorney with an impeccable record to represent you. Commander Ross agreed to take up your case. I felt he performed to our expectations."

"Clearly," T'Rel replied. She paused briefly, considering her next words with the same meticulous care she applied to every aspect of her duty.

"My next inquiry pertains to the reason behind your decision to select me as your executive officer."

Leo grinned, leaning back slightly. "Honestly, I thought that would be the first thing you'd ask."

She remained composed, her gaze steady. "Given your personal and professional political considerations and the circumstances of your recent promotion, you had the latitude to select any officer within Starfleet as your executive officer."

He nodded, acknowledging her observation. "Yeah, that's true."

She continued, her expression and tone impassive. "During our initial communication regarding this assignment, the brevity of our discussion precluded an exploration of your motivations. I am compelled to understand them now."

Leo leaned back, crossing his arms as he weighed his response. "After your acquittal, I knew you intended to return to space duty thanks to those 'personal political considerations.' But this is Starfleet, and reputation can override objectivity. I knew from personal experience, that it was highly unlikely any captain would offer you a role aligned with your experience and rank. Even if a small starship were available, the prospect of an independent command was even less probable."

She inclined her head slightly, her response measured and precise. "Your assessment is logically sound."

He leaned forward, the sincerity in his voice sharpening. "The only way for you to reestablish your career trajectory was for someone to recognize your capabilities beyond the recent events. It takes a single captain willing to look beyond the superficial judgments to show that good officers sometimes find themselves in unfavorable situations. I know what that's like. If someone had extended that opportunity to me after Keller sidelined me, my career might look a lot different today."

T'Rel studied him before replying, "Leo, I acknowledge the personal nature of your decision. Your willingness to disregard external perceptions and act on merit alone is... gratifying. I shall execute my duties with the utmost commitment to ensuring the success of your command."

Leo offered her a small, genuine smile. "I know you will, T'Rel. That's exactly why you're here. Together, we'll make sure everyone else sees what I see."

She gave a slight nod, accepting his words with her customary stoicism. While the path forward remained complex, she found it was not insurmountable—not because of any newfound simplicity, but because someone willing to act without prejudice had recognized her merit.

T'Rel, sensing the conclusion of their informal discussion, rose gracefully from her seat. With her left hand behind her back, she extended her right hand in the traditional Vulcan salute. "I am here to serve, Captain," she told him, invoking the time-honored words.

Leo stood in response, mirroring her gesture with respect. "Your service honors us, Commander."

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