

The young navigator was excited. And why not? Sixteen-year-old Galen DuLac was the first Avalonian to see the stars! He had entered glorious combat with a race of Black Knights in strange metal chariots, and most importantly, he had won, though not without a great deal of help from his shipmates.

Indeed, the whole crew was in a state of exhilaration. Despite being attacked by a strange sextet of vessels seeking target practice, the death toll had been only seventeen when, by rights, it should have been five hundred and ten.

DuLac's idol, his commanding officer, had decided to honor the valiant dead *Arcturus* knights by holding a fete in their honor. Valhalla would be bursting with pride this night!

The boy entered the turbolift, still marveling at this wondrous device that could whisk a person anywhere on this glorious chariot like magic.

The youth exited at the engineering level. Galen's curiosity had been aroused by the unusual appearance of chief communications officer Aerina Lorrass. The lass was a gorgeous woman with, Father Be Praised, steed-like attributes. Being a knight and thus coming to know the value of horses, Galen had been awed at the sight of a powerful female who also happened to be a sentient steed.

Reverently, Galen had exuberantly attempted to talk with the damsel. Sadly, the 'damsel' had reacted with such arrogance and contempt that the boy had been reduced to tears. Thank the Holy One that no one had witnessed his shame! Luckily, there was an alternative...

DuLac had discovered the existence of another such woman in engineering. Perhaps she would be more chivalrous than the foul banshee of communications! Even if this one turned out to be as fiendish, he was too excited to care at the moment.

The object of his search was walking right toward him as he exited the turbolift. She was apparently heading toward the now-vacant lift, a large wrench securely in her right hand.

DuLac stammered. "M... My Lady?" he asked timidly, fearing to alienate her as he had the other one.

The engineer turned. "My Lady?" she asked herself. "Hmmm... archaic, but intriguing..." She looked at DuLac and said, "Yes, Ensign?"

"I be Galen DuLac, a ship's mariner. Might I ask of thee? I shall but little impose," he promised hopefully.

Like many others who had met DuLac, Cygnian assistant chief engineer Briana Lithir instantly found herself liking the boy. His enthusiasm and sheer awe were a refreshing change from the jaded attitude of most crew members. Lithir managed to interpret his odd speech. Obviously the youth wanted information. Why not?

"What do you want to know, Mister DuLac?" she inquired politely, discerning his fear or apprehension.

"I... Please be not insulted, for I mean only praise to thee... I notice thy steed-like form. Of what race be thee?"

From anyone else, this question could have been no greater insult. Cygnians were quite proud of their equine descent and never tolerated slights or mockery in this area. Yet, from this obviously anachronistic male, perhaps he was trying to 'honor' her.

"I am Briana Lithir, a Cygnian of engineering skills," she responded, deliberately mimicking his mode of speech, both so that he would be able to understand her and as a veiled warning. She was now keeping her voice level and stern.

DuLac did not understand how, but it seemed that he was about to commit another breach of etiquette. He tried again.

"O', my Lady, please do not look with disfavor upon this ignorant squire," he beseeched. "I be but unfamiliar with peoples not of mine own. I so wish to learn, and thy race-sister became so wroth with me..."

Ah! NOW Lithir understood. Anyone experiencing the displeasure of encountering that obnoxious Lorrass would be bound to fear or distrust Cygnians. Besides, Lithir began to realize that DuLac was simply incapable of sarcasm or insult, unlike some other people she knew...

Like the young man who was now arriving from the turbolift.

"HAY, Lithir," security officer Mikalas Vasilakis called as usual. "Goin' off to inSTALL some new gadget? Ya might have a BIT of trouble, y'know. How's about TROTting off to get some good men ta help?"

Lithir betrayed no emotion, but her adrenaline was surging. This idiot was going too far. For his part, DuLac ignored the oaf, shocked though he was.

“Again, I mean thee no offense, M’Lady Lithir,” he began, glaring briefly at Vasilakis. “Does thine equine aspect grant thee the sheer power and velocity of thy forbears, as mine own primate ancestors might grant me the ways of the trees?”

Before Lithir could respond, Vasilakis interrupted.

“Sure, kid,” he laughed, elbowing the boy’s ribs. “They’re just great for riding!” He jogged away, quite taken by his own ‘wit.’

DuLac was horrified. On his planet, the miscreant would have been challenged to a duel for his behavior!

“My Lady!” the boy cried. “Surely thou shalt not let yon churl’s deeds go unavenged!”

Lithir remained calm, to DuLac’s continued astonishment.

“We’ll continue our talk another time, Galen. Perhaps at the party?”

The Cygnian walked toward the turbolift, the wrench still held firmly in her hand – too firmly.

DuLac’s eyes grew wide as he noticed that the wrench had been bent into a useless shape! “Oh, Most Holy Father!” he cried. “She be not only a damsel and steed... She be a witch!!” Suddenly, the recreation deck seemed much more attractive, and off he scooted.

Space, the Final Frontier...

These are the voyages of the starship *Arcturus*!

Star Trek: Arcturus

“Let the Revels Begin!”

By Michael Cohen, Carey Sperling, and Christine Tromba

Briana Lithir stormed through her cabin, finally free to vent her anger. Even the Victorian decor in her bedroom failed to mollify her.

“Great Goddess, how much more of this must I take???” she fumed. “I can handle the occasional snipes and ‘pun’ishment, but Vasilakis has crossed the line!”

She paced the length of her cabin for five full minutes thinking of adequate revenge. “Hmmm... Some bananas in his food synthesizer? Maybe a jungle motif in his quarters?” Then it came to her. “I’ll give him his ‘ride’ – Cygnian style!” She fired instructions to her computer, frantically working out the calculations.

“So they think Copeland is a practical joker, eh?” A diabolical smirk crossed her face. “Wait till they get a load of me!”

Elsewhere aboard the *Arcturus*, the subject of Lithir’s musing – Marine security chief A. Carey Copeland – was to have problems of his own. Unknown to his commanding officer, Copeland had smuggled a six-month-old German Shepherd puppy into his quarters before the starship had departed Earth. The lonely animal was frantically pawing at Copeland’s door, begging to be let out. It was not long before his left paw touched the door pad... It opened... ZOOM!

Briana Lithir had no sooner left her quarters to accomplish the task she had set for herself when a brown blur whizzed toward her. The blur halted in the middle of the corridor, spying a potential playmate.

“WOOF!” it bellowed hopefully, its tail wagging furiously.

Lithir noticed a silver flash on the canine’s neck. She knelt to examine it, receiving several licks on the face in the process. The collar tag bore the name ‘Copeland, Achilles, CPL.’

Briana Lithir's mood lightened considerably. "So, Copeland has an 'Achilles' Heel.' This seems to be my day to catch up on all those practical jokes I've been planning." She then looked at the dog's face, his tongue hanging crooked from his jaws, and said, "Hey, Puppy. Would you like to go to a party?" She nodded her head, prompting the dog to do the same. A turbolift was conveniently close by.

The two-level recreation deck was packed. With the exception of a skeleton crew manning the bridge and vital sections of the starship, virtually every member of the *USS Arcturus* had chosen to attend the unprecedented celebration taking place. Not only was the crew happy about its fine performance during their shakedown cruise, but so was Starfleet Command. In a unique act of solidarity, the top echelons had not only unanimously approved of all of Captain Eric W. Johnson's recommendations for promotions, awards, and commendations – plus they had added an unexpected promotion of their own.

On the bridge, Commodore Eric Johnson relaxed in his command chair, absent-mindedly stroking his new rank insignia. So much had happened in the last few weeks. Interviews with his crew had revealed perhaps the strangest array of personnel in Starfleet history. As he settled into his role as a starship commanding officer, Johnson found himself in charge of a humanized Vulcan, a teenaged navigator from a Medieval culture, an Orion first officer (Unheard of!), a Vulcanized human, an undecipherable Efrosian, a nearly-psyhic Caitian yeoman, a gregarious Edoan, and a Terran... sorcerer... among others!!!

In just a few days, Johnson had been impressed, angered, elated, verbally abused, even nearly murdered! He had been virtually helpless to prevent the almost total obliteration of his brand new ship, yet now here he was; the toast of Starfleet.

Starfleet Command had even paid Johnson the ultimate compliment of dispatching an Admiral by fast transport to offer personal congratulations!

Johnson refused to allow himself to relax completely. After all, anything was still possible.

"I probably ought to check out the party going on in the rec deck myself," the new commodore mused to himself, drawing curious glances from the helmsman and navigator. "Captain's privilege and duty, after all. Besides, she'll be there."

'She' of course, referred to his consort, Athena Arcadian of Alpha Centauri – physical therapist and party hostess extraordinaire. How he needed her reassuring words and soothing arms at the moment!

The rec deck was a bustle of activity. At the center of this activity was a table upon which was seated an ebony-skinned man dressed in ceremonial robes bearing odd symbols. The man was N'aghari, the crew member who had walked into an inferno during the attack on the *Arcturus* and walked out carrying four critically injured men, himself totally unscathed! Then-Captain Johnson had been delighted to offer the ship's records officer a well-deserved promotion and several awards. To both Johnson's and the crew's shock, N'aghari had turned all of those honors down!!

The growing group surrounding N'aghari listened raptly as he told fascinating stories of his Haitian culture and sang beautiful, haunting chants of mystical power. Silence descended on the gathered crowd as N'aghari finished. Would SOMEONE have the courage to ask the as-yet unasked question?

Someone finally did.

Ensign Galen DuLac, fresh from his harrowing experience on the engineering deck, approached N'aghari.

"Sir," he commenced timidly. "Might I pose a query to thee?"

Several crewmen chuckled. DuLac's speech and exuberance always managed to amuse the crew. Somehow, he made everyone he came in contact with feel years younger.

N'aghari stared into DuLac's puppy-like eyes, amused. "Certainly, young man," was his only response.

"Good sir," DuLac probed. "Thou hast performed mighty deeds this day. Thy courage and valor hath no equal. Surely thou hast earned great glory! Tell me, I pray thee, why thou spurn thy just rewards!"

Naghari smiled. "'Just,' Galen?" he replied. "Hardly." His voice was soft yet somehow powerful. "The medals offered me are given to those who have risked death while performing their duties. Since the flames could not harm me, no such risk existed. Therefore, I am not entitled to such rewards." Not a trace of false modesty existed in the man's words.

DuLac raised a glass of amber liquid. “In any event, Noble Sir, a toast to thy great deeds is called for!” he exclaimed. “Surely thou wouldst not deny us our delight in saluting thee!” The entire crowd nodded its agreement.

N’aghari acquiesced graciously, flattered and amused. The toast began but the solemn moment was suddenly broken by the sound of desperate choking and gasping. The group noticed DuLac’s face turning bright red as he coughed and sputtered. The naive boy had drained his glass in one swallow, which was fooliah, as Saurian Brandy was known as one of the most potent (legal) alcoholic beverages in the known galaxy!

As the group guffawed, DuLac continued to choke and gasp.

“In... the Most Holy... Father’s... name! What form of Dragon’s Breath... is that noxious brew?” he finally managed to rasp.

A short but extremely muscular man in Marine Corps battle dress approached, himself almost choking – from laughter.

“That’s Saurian Brandy, Galen,” security chief A. Carey Copeland chortled, slapping the boy’s back several times. After some time, DuLac’s breathing finally returned to normal.

“I... thank thee... ah...” DuLac hesitated, not recognizing Copeland’s rank insignia. Copeland was a Starfleet Marine officer, not a regular fleet officer.

“Copeland. Major Carey Copeland,” the Marine answered proudly, offering his hand. DuLac shook Copeland’s hand silently admiring the small man’s strong grip.

“Why, Sir, is thy coat-of-arms different from all others?” DuLac inquired, pointing to his own newly-acquired ensign’s insignia.

“Coat-of-arms? Oh!” Copeland quickly caught on as he watched the young navigator gesture toward his own uniform shoulder strap. “I’m a Marine. You never met a Marine before?”

“Nay, Sir, I was ne’er informed of other than one order of knighthood aboard this sky vessel.”

“No problem. We’ll talk about it sometime. But I have to be somewhere soon, so I’ll see you later.”

As Copeland left the rec deck, he said to himself, “Was I ever wrong about him. Here I thought he was just a big, phony brown-noser since he reported aboard, the way the Captain likes him and all, but turns out no way! Kid’s too green! Galen, ‘little brother,’ have I got some plans for you...”

Not far away, newly appointed Assistant Chief Medical Officer Athena Arcadian was discussing her favorite sport with another crewman.

“So, Xavier,” she was saying to a tall, three-armed, three-legged, vaguely reptilian being. “As soon as we get enough ‘Squids,’ we’ll start up our Skatsball team. You interested?”

Xavier nodded. “Sure! You know I’m game for anything,” the willowy Edoan responded brightly. Neither Arcadian nor Xavier noticed the Efrosian with ice-cold blue eyes standing nearby, nursing a glass filled with a grey liquid and watching their conversation intently.

Meanwhile, Copeland had almost reached the room’s exit when he heard that certain word. Not believing his ears, the young Marine officer immediately turned around and rushed back over to where Arcadian and Xavier were standing.

“Hey, did you say Skatsball??” he pressed hopefully, ordering a beer and seating himself next to Arcadian.

“You bet. Our team’ll be the best in the fleet, too. You interested?” Arcadian asked.

“Why not?” Copeland replied. “I used to play on the *Konkordium*. Pretty good at it too, even if I say so myself,” he bragged.

Arcadian noted the Marine’s bravado, and also noticed that he was only nursing at his beer.

“Well, I don’t know, Copeland,” she teased, gulping her own glass of Saurian brandy. “From the way you’re sipping at your beer, I’m not sure you’re man enough.” Copeland’s competitive spirit was aroused.

“Oh, yeah?” he retorted. “Anything YOU can drink, I can drink better!”

The almost-forgotten Xavier joined in.

“Oh, yeah?” he challenged in his high pitched tones. “I’ll drink the two of you under the table!”

Both Copeland and Arcadian regarded the nearly-emaciated-looking Edoan.

“BULL!” came their identical response.

In his best ‘I-got-em-now’ manner, Xavier ordered FOUR Saurian brandies. The rec room barkeep poured the requested drinks, placed them on the table in front of the three participants and – enjoying the event – raised his hand.

“On your marks!” the bartender called. “Get set! ...Go!”

Arcadian and Copeland each grabbed a glass and drank furiously. Snickering, Xavier calmly placed a glass in two of his three hands before downing one, then the other, in an amazing seven seconds! Arcadian and Copeland gaped. The race was definitely on!

* * *

Meanwhile, as the three drinking contestants were deadening their brain cells, another crewman would soon suffer the same fate in a much more unpleasant manner.

Mikalas Vasilakis entered one of the turbolifts.

“Rec deck,” he ordered. “This ought to be a great party,” he thought, still chortling over his clever remarks earlier to that Cygnian stuffed-shirt. “Wine, girls, music, all the good things in life...”

The turbolift door slammed shut uncharacteristically. It moved but then began to spin slowly.

“What’s the matter with this thing?” Vasilakis demanded. “Computer, halt turbolift.”

The spinning increased. Vasilakis’ annoyance turned to concern, then panic. Faster and faster it spun, pinning its victim to the wall. The man tried frantically to reach the manual control, but to no avail. Five G’s of centrifugal force tended to be a bit much for most people!

“STOP!” Vasilakis cried uselessly, the blood rushing from his brain. “Cut it out! MOMM-MEEE...! H-AAAAAAA-LLLL-PPPPP...!”

Mercifully, the spinning stopped and the door opened. Unmercifully, the motion had ended instantaneously. Vasilakis performed a marvelous imitation of a mummified seagull as he soared through the air, finally crashing ignominiously into the nearest bulkhead.

Vasilakis forced himself to his feet and staggered on toward the party.

“Wine,” he moaned. “Women... Music...” Nausea washed through him just as he turned to rush toward the nearest head.

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About the same time, executive officer Kira K’tal Tefallaran Smith arrived at the party. Looking around, the Orion woman noticed fellow science specialists Samuk of Vulcan and Iona Hanlon of Delta-IV and walked over to greet them. She noticed Hanlon was gazing raptly at both Samuk and another science officer, the tall, crimson-attired, white haired and demonic-visaged assistant chief science officer Bael V’ahst-Ohrne’ Dagon of Efros Delta.

“Hello, Ma’am,” Hanlon managed to greet her superior officer. Kira smiled, understanding the sensuous Deltan as no other crewmember could.

“Interesting, aren’t they?” Kira whispered. “Pheromones going?” Hanlon nodded.

“The Vulcan is most fascinating. Bael... Well, he’s so handsome but so... evil-looking.” The Deltan smiled, if somewhat hesitantly. Kira decided to act.

“Miss Hanlon, suppose we see if we can melt our assistant chief science officer’s Efrosian cool,” she grinned softly.

While Hanlon’s libido-arousing pheromones were wafting uncontrollably through the room, Kira added her own emotion-altering pheromones, aiming them directly at Bael. The Efrosian was so intent on entering his report on the recent behavior of crew members Arcadian, Copeland, and Xavier into a padd that he was completely unprepared for the psychic barrage now battering his brain. He momentarily contemplated his still-untouched grey beverage. A moment later the glass shattered and Bael collapsed. Kira’s amusement turned to anger.

“How dare you become intoxicated??” she shouted over the Efrosian’s limp body. She then activated the nearest intercom and announced, “Sickbay! Get a team and take my moronic assistant there!”

It took almost a minute for several orderlies to arrive in the rec deck. As Bael was being dealt with – loaded onto an antigrav gurney for the trip back to sickbay – Copeland and Arcadian were now as thoroughly inebriated as the Efrosian. As they watched the orderlies taking Bael away, a wicked grin crossed Copeland’s face.

“Wanna go fer a ride??” he slurred to Arcadian.

“Shure,” she replied, equally sloshed. Without notice, the two left the rec room. Also unnoticed, the crafty Cygnian engineer and her faithful new four-legged friend managed to slip in unnoticed behind the medical team. Only a few seconds later, the hapless turbolift stuntdriver Mikalas Vasilakis arrived. He staggered past Dr. Kyri Morgaan, Commander Kira, and the unnoticed Briana Lithir and friend, heading toward the bar.

“Turbolift...,” he moaned. “Racing... Stars... Little tweeting birdies...” He wound up on a stool right next to the now-tipsy Edoan engineer, who turned to look at him.

“Want a drink?” Xavier asked brightly.

FOOMP! Vasilakis fell back off the stool. The Edoan regarded the unconscious man.

“Was it something I said?” he asked before returning to his brandy.

Kira and Lithir noticed Vasilakis. Both stared at the unconscious man – Kira with anger, Lithir with barely-concealed amusement. The Cygnian rolled her eyes and her one-word comment spoke volumes.

“Men!”

At that moment, Commodore Eric Johnson arrived on the rec deck. He searched the vast hall and upper balconies for Arcadian, but to no avail. He made a few inquiries, but no one seemed to know the assistant medical officer’s whereabouts. Giving up after nearly half an hour, he seated himself at the nearest table to rest and grab a bite to eat. Suddenly, and without warning, a furry object jumped into his lap. Overcoming his initial surprise, he looked down to find two wide brown eyes staring furtively at him.

“Where in the galaxy did this dog come from?” Johnson demanded to no one in particular. Then he spotted the dog’s collar and identification tag. He examined it, receiving a wet kiss on his face for his trouble. It did not surprise him in the least to learn who the dog’s owner was.

“It figures,” he ranted. “Copeland.” He then looked around, but did not see the Tamurilian anywhere around. “COPELAND!!” he bellowed, but his yelling went unanswered.

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The object of the Commodore’s wrath had staggered to the shuttlebay, Arcadian in tow. The door opened, revealing a lone guard. The young man acknowledged his superior officer.

Assuming his best military posture, Copeland appeared to briefly inspect the Marine before slurring, “Step aside, Private.”

The major’s condition did not escape the guard’s notice. “Sir?? I...,” he started to say

“Are you questioning my orders?” Copeland demanded, glaring at the private.

The Marine capitulated immediately. “Sir! No, Sir!” he replied before moving aside. Copeland stormed into the shuttlebay past the young Marine. Arcadian smiled sweetly at the security guard as she followed Copeland.

“Boy, whadda wimp!” Copeland remarked in triumph as the two approached one of the fightercraft. “C’mon, let’s you’n me have some fun!”

* * *

Back on the recreation deck, Johnson approached the bar and ordered a drink, still asking about Arcadian.

“Oh, I saw her, sir,” the now-inebriated Edoan Xavier offered. “She and Copeland left just before you got here! Something about a ride...” Johnson’s fury grew.

“Ride? Together? C-O-P-E-L-A-N-D!!!!!!”

Just then, an alarm sounded. The Commodore quickly moved to the end of the bar and slammed the intercom.

“Johnson!! Report!” he cried in his best Federation imitation of Klingon battle-language.

“Sir,” a young-sounding voice replied. “Err... Major Copeland... Well, he...”

Johnson’s patience vanished. “Out with it, Mister!!” he demanded.

The chastised Marine private cleared his throat, then reported, “Sir! The Major and a female medical officer have launched one of the fighters! Major Copeland did not appear fit to fly, sir!”

Noticing his executive officer now standing next to him, a worried look on her face, Johnson beckoned to her. “Kira, you’re with me!” he ordered before racing to the exit.

Engineer Briana Lithir, overhearing the alarm, charged after the two senior officers. “Oh, no!” she cried in anguish. “Not my landing bay!!”

* * *

The shuttlebay was bustling with activity as the commodore and his first officer entered the control booth. The tactical monitor showed the fighter performing several high-G turns and evasive maneuvers. Johnson immediately punched the communications panel.

“Copeland! Land that fighter! Now!” he ordered.

“Aw, gee, do I have to?” a boyish voice whined.

“Now!!”

“But I’m not done yet! Five more minutes?”

“NOW!!” Johnson growled. “That’s a direct order!!”

“Am I in trouble?”

“GET THE HELL IN HERE!!!!!!”

“Awww. You’re no fun anymore...”

Johnson watched as the control panel monitor showed the fightercraft turning around and headheading back toward the open hangar. Everyone murmured suddenly-recalled childhood prayers, and fortunately the deities answered. Incredibly, the fighter appeared to be making a pinpoint landing right in the center of the bay! Johnson, Kira, and Lithir gave a collective sigh of relief.

SSSS-CCCCCCC-RRRRRR-EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE-CCCCC-HHHHH!!!!!!! The fighter hit the deck and skidded forward, finally coming to a stop mere meters from the inner cargo bay doors. The canopy opened and Copeland exited, climbing down the side ladder giggling. Arcadian soon followed, gagging. Lithir stalked toward the unsuspecting Marine officer.

“Pretty good landing, huh?” he grinned conceitedly.

Lithir was not amused. She hefted the stout Tamurilian high enough that his eyes met hers.

“Watch it!” she hissed. “Just watch it. Or next time the crew finds out about your little ‘Achilles’ heel!”

Copeland winced. “You didn’t like the landing?” he asked sadly. In response, the Cygnian simply released her grip, dropping Copeland on his pride before she stalked off.

“Now I don’t feel so bad about the dog...,” she remarked to herself as she walked away.

Almost as if on cue, the curious pup which had followed Johnson the others down from the party entered the shuttlebay and spotted his master. WHOOSH! Copeland found himself covered in joyous licks.

“Hiya, Rusty!” Copeland cried happily as he tried to push the enthusiastic dog away long enough to get back to his feet. Then he stopped and considered the situation, almost regaining his sobriety from the shock. “RUSTY?? How did you...? Oh, brother! What else can go wrong,” Copeland groaned, gazing toward the overhead. His eyes met three hazy, enraged green faces.

“Gee, Kira, I didn’t know you were triplets!” Copeland squinted his eyes and looked more closely at the first officer as he said, “You look kinda upset. Are you mad at me?”

Kira’s answer was concise. CRACK! The first blow fractured the Marine’s nose.

“You aw bad ad be, aren’t yew?” Copeland warbled from where he lay on his back on the hanger deck.

Commodore Johnson then stepped over, looking at his security chief with displeasure.

“Private, put Major Copeland and his mutt in the brig!” he ordered.

“Who’re yew callin’ a mudd?” Copeland protested, staring at the angry commodore before adding, “Sir!”

Ignoring the Marine officer, Johnson now turned to his errant paramour. “Would you care to explain yourself... Doctor?” he asked, emphasizing her title.

Arcadian, now resembling Kira’s younger sister, if only in complexion, could only groan.

“Eric... I don’t feel so good...,” she remarked. “I think I’m gonna be sick...”

And she was, right onto Johnson’s boots.

* * *

The next day, Commodore Johnson called a Captain’s Mast. Several of the crew – including Arcadian, Copeland, and Xavier – stood at attention on the opposite side of a long table covered with a green table cloth.

“The best crew in Starfleet,” he began sarcastically. “You people make me sick! I grant you some leeway and you behave like children! Thirty fist-fights! Six people in sickbay, drunk out of their skulls! I ought to rip all those commendations and officer’s insignias right off the lot of you! You can rest assured that this won’t be forgotten! Now get back to your posts and act like Starfleet personnel!”

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The shuttlebay was finally beginning to look more like it was supposed to. And why not? Briana Lithir took great pride in the appearance of ‘her’ ship. She stood over her hapless Edoan subordinate as he scrubbed the floor, an ancient dental cleansing brush in each of his three hands.

“Any more bright ideas, ‘Tripod,’ like organizing another drinking contest,” she murmured sweetly into his left ear. “...And YOU’LL GO OUT INTO SPACE THROUGH THE TORPEDO TUBES IN YOUR UNDERWEAR!!”

Xavier winced in pain, still badly hung over.

* * *

Down in the brig, Galen DuLac was standing outside Copeland’s cell. He had been one of the few members of the crew to behave himself, but Johnson had decided to assure himself that the boy not ever try a stunt like Copeland’s, so he had the navigator stand guard for the Marine major.

“Listen, Galen,” Copeland’s barely-functioning mouth burred. “Get a message to Maddox for me. Tell him about my dog and the K-9 Corps. He’ll know what to do.”

DuLac nodded.

“Mutt, huh?” the Marine sneered. “We’ll see...!”

* * *

Back in sickbay, Commodore Johnson bent over ‘his’ woman, both concerned and angry. He called to the chief medical officer.

“Morgaan, I want you to give them something to keep them hung over for a few days. Be sure they don’t get access to anti-intox drugs. I want them to remember this for a l-o-n-g time.”

Morgaan did not like the idea of harming her patients. Still, a lesson WAS in order.

“Athena as well, sir?” she asked carefully.

“ESPECIALLY her! And find out what happened to Bael!!”

Morgaan had discovered that the Efrosian had not been drunk at all. He had, instead, sustained a brain hemorrhage! She believed that Baael had been a victim of a psychic attack, but refused to disclose this until she could be certain.

* * *

Returning to the bridge, Johnson seated himself in the center seat.

“Ahead, warp factor four, Mister Stryker,” he addressed the vaguely Cygnian helmsman. “We have someplace we need to be.”

Stryker acknowledged. The *Arcturus* was still due to meet an awaiting admiral.

“The toast of Starfleet,” Johnson mused to himself as the starship accelerated. “Commodore Johnson – tactical genius. Admiral to offer personal congratulations.” Johnson winced.

The End