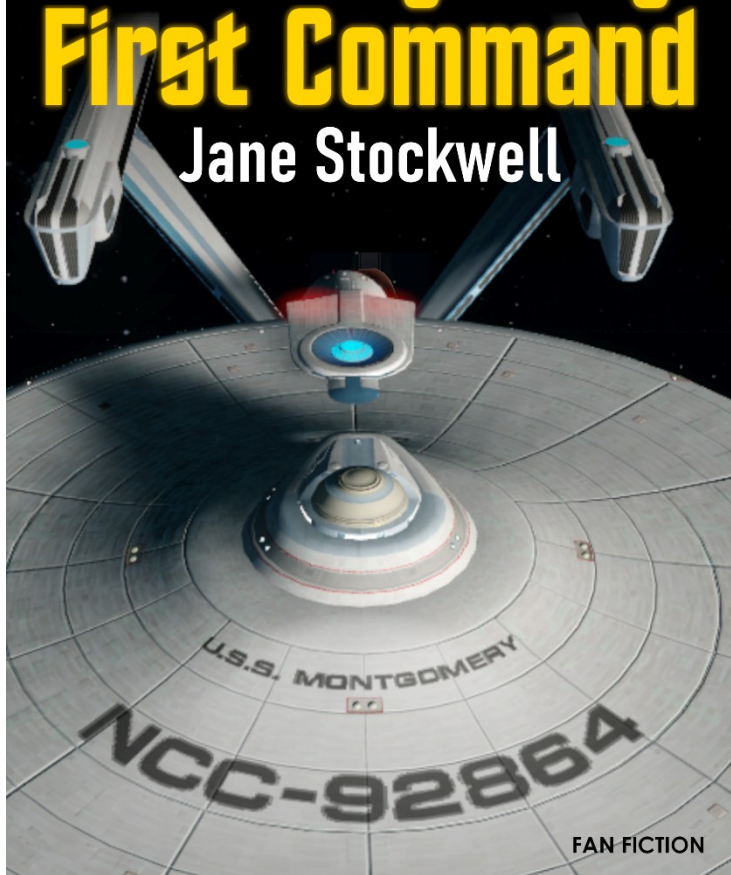


STAR TREK

USS Montgomery: First Command

Jane Stockwell



FAN FICTION

Chapter 1

Sometimes it was difficult for a Vulcan to control their emotions. Invariably, interacting with humans was the reason for it. Captain Sivar, commanding officer of the *USS Howard Hughes*, was having one of those moments now.

The human in question was the one that usually loosened Sivar's grip on his control; she was undoubtedly the most arrogant, stubborn and... *illogical* human, he had ever come across in his one hundred and thirty years. She was also quite brilliant when she set her mind to it, but to call her a challenge was an understatement.

She also happened to be his first officer, and while he always encouraged his first officers to be vocal, Lieutenant Commander Arienne Landy took that to extremes. Sivar took a deep breath and tried to reason with the angry young woman in front of him. The rest of the bridge officers watched expectantly as the captain and his first officer stood facing one another. This was far from the first time they had witnessed a confrontation between the two most senior members of the crew.

"Lieutenant Commander, I have already explained my reasoning for the course of action we have taken. Logic dictates..."

"Logic? How is it logical to let the bastards who attacked the Andorian cargo vessel escape?" Landy demanded, pushing her long brown hair away from her face.

“The Andorian ship is damaged, and their crew needs our assistance. Besides, we know this group of pirates has multiple ships. If we were to chase this ship, what would prevent them from signaling another of their comrades to come and remove the remainder of the cargo? Or worse, steal the cargo and kill the crew?” Sivar sighed. “No, Commander Landy, staying here to protect the ship and its cargo was the correct and logical action.”

“Fine,” Arienne Landy snapped. “But we should be out hunting those pirates and stop them from attacking any other ships.”

“That is precisely what Starfleet intends to do,” Sivar replied. “But this is neither the time nor place for that to occur.” He addressed his communications officer, Lieutenant Harvey. “Mr. Harvey, please signal the Andorians and inform them that we will beam over shortly with medical assistance and a repair crew.”

“Aye Captain,” Harvey replied and turned toward her console.

Sivar sat back down in the captain’s chair. “Mr. Landy, please organize an away team. Ask Dr. Vhenkara and Mr. Davidson to beam across with you to the *Tovil’s Pride*.”

Arienne Landy looked as though she was about to argue further, but seemed to change her mind. “Yes, sir,” she replied sullenly and stalked off the bridge. The rest of the bridge crew looked at each other before returning to their stations.

Most starship captains would have attempted to have her shunted out of their crew by now. Not that they would have been successful had they tried. Arienne Landy came from a family

with a long history in Starfleet. The Landy tradition was strong and the name carried a lot of respect amongst its leadership.

Her grandfather was retired Starfleet Admiral Seth Landy, and even five years since his retirement, he still held a lot of influence in Starfleet. Seth Landy was renowned as a gifted negotiator and tactician. He had averted many conflicts throughout the Alpha Quadrant that had instead lead to systems joining the Federation.

His son, Lieutenant James Landy, Arienne's father, had a promising career cut short when he was killed in action fighting the Klingons when she was just a baby. Arienne's mother, Commander Tamara Landy, daughter-in-law of the Admiral, had been the chief engineer on the *USS Thy'lek Shran*. Arienne was just fifteen when her mother had died when ejecting a breaching warp core and thereby preventing the destruction of the ship and loss of the entire crew.

Raised by her paternal grandmother until she was of age, there was no question of her joining Starfleet. She had spent her life surrounded by the stories of her family. The stories, but not so much her family. She rarely saw her mother even before the incident that took Tamara Landy's life. She did, however, learn that the name "Landy" carried a lot of weight with it, and Arienne Landy had never been afraid to use it to her advantage.

At the Academy, she had coasted through her studies, leaning on her family name and her own natural charisma. She was a very capable student but was frequently rude to her peers and instructors. The tragedy of losing both her parents in Starfleet

made her something of a celebrity, and trespasses that may not have been forgiven for others remained unaddressed.

Her first posting was to the Constellation-class vessel, the *USS Charles Tucker III* as helmswoman. She performed her role with skill but frequently got into arguments with her superior officers. She was arrogant and entitled and was quickly promoted off the ship just so they could be rid of her.

Over the next few years, she rose rapidly through the ranks through a combination of her own skill, the influence of her grandfather, and despairing captains eager to move her along.

Arienne was transferred into her current role on the Excelsior-class ship as the first officer while still a Lieutenant Commander, a promotion that was almost unheard of. Most Starfleet personnel of her rank would have to serve time as a junior bridge officer on a ship like the *Howard Hughes* or as a first officer on a science vessel or an older but formidable vessel, such as one of the remaining Miranda- or Constitution-class ships.

The captain of the *USS Howard Hughes* hadn't tried to rid himself of his problematic first officer. Landy had served in the role for nearly a year now, and for her faults, she had the potential to be a fine officer, and perhaps a good captain one day. Sivar tried to temper her fire with his calm logic, establishing a culture of thinking before acting, but the young lieutenant commander was driven by her emotions and ambition and often bucked against his authority.

She needed seasoning, a firm hand, and something to knock the arrogance out of her.

Chapter 2

A few minutes later, Landy, along with the *Howard Hughes's* chief medical officer, Dr. Vhenkara, and the chief engineer, Lieutenant Commander Carlie Davidson, beamed into the transporter bay of *Tovil's Pride*. Smoke from battle damage with the pirates filled the Andorian ship, and the engineer and medic quickly attended to their tasks of repairing both the freighter and her crew.

A young Andorian approached her, blue blood running down his face from a cut just below his left antenna. His arm was in a makeshift sling, his clothing was dirty and torn. When Vhenkara saw him, concern crossed his face and he immediately reached for his medical tricorder.

The Andorian shook his head. "No, please look at the other crew members. The wound on my head is shallow, and my arm is not urgent. I will attend to my injuries later."

He then turned back to Arienne. "Lieutenant Commander Landy?" he asked her.

The first officer nodded. "Yes, I am she." Landy looked around. "Where is Captain Shrerea?"

"I'm afraid that the wounds she sustained in the battle were too great," the Andorian replied sadly. "She died just a few minutes ago."

Arienne paused. She had known that there was substantial damage to the cargo vessel, but she hadn't realized that there had been casualties. "I am very sorry for your loss," she said. "May I ask your name?"

The Andorian bowed his head, tears in his eyes. "I am Thisiv. I am... was... the first officer of *Tovil's Pride*. Captain, now, I suppose."

"I am sorry we have met under such circumstances, Captain Thisiv," Landy replied. "Were there any other casualties?"

"No," Thisiv answered. "Just Captain Shrerea. She ordered the rest of the crew into the main cargo hold while she tried to fight off the pirates. The hull is strongest there." He wiped the tears from his eyes. "A conduit in the navigation console overloaded as she was trying to take us to safety, causing the console to explode. It was only after your ship chased away the pirates that the extent of her injuries was known."

Landy shook her head angrily. "Which is why we should be chasing those pirates to make them pay for their actions." She couldn't *believe* that they weren't off hunting down the pirate ships.

Thisiv looked at her quizzically. "How would that help us now, Lieutenant Commander? It won't bring back our Captain, and we require your assistance more than we require revenge." He gestured to the injured crew in the smoky room. "Take a look around, Commander Landy, our people are hurt and our ship is badly damaged. Justice, revenge, or whatever else you want to call it can wait."

The young Starfleet officer paused, seeing the *Howard Hughes*' doctor treating the cargo vessel's crew. Carlie Davidson, the chief engineer, was deep in discussion with one of the Andorians, whose blue face had a heavy bandage wrapped around his right ear. Her anger washed away as she realized that right now, their best course of action was to render assistance to *Tovil's Pride*.

"Of course, Captain," she said, her voice muted. "We will try to render whatever assistance we can."

A moment later, her communicator whistled. She withdrew it from her belt and answered, "Landy."

Captain Sivar's familiar voice came through her communicator, "Lieutenant Commander, please inquire of the Andorians as to the status of their warp engines and their shields."

Arienne's eyes widened. "What's happening, Captain?"

The Vulcan's calm voice responded. "I'm afraid that our sensors indicate that the pirates are returning and in numbers."

"How long do we have?"

"About ten minutes, Lieutenant Commander," Sivar replied.

Landy looked at Thisiv, who had heard the exchange. "The warp drive is completely inoperative, it will take some time to repair them, and only then with assistance from your crew. Our shields are functioning, but only at twenty percent capacity," he replied.

“Did you hear that, Captain?” Arienne spoke into the communicator.

“Yes, Mr. Landy. Start preparations to evacuate the Andorian crew to the *Howard Hughes*.”

Thisiv shook his head. “I’m afraid that is quite impossible, Captain. Our cargo contains medical supplies that are needed by our people, we must defend them.”

“Can we transport them across to the Howard Hughes?”

“I very much doubt there is time, and even if there were, it’s unlikely they would fit into your cargo holds,” the Andorian replied.

“Captain, we will beam over the injured crew and Dr. Vhenkara. I will need Mr. Davidson to try to restore the shields on *Tovil’s Pride*,” Landy said.

“I will stay here also,” Thisiv said. “I’m more familiar with her systems than you or your chief engineer.”

“You are injured, Thisiv,” Arienne replied. “You should beam across with the rest of your crew.”

“I am now Captain of this vessel, and my place is here,” the Andorian replied. “The rest of my crew will go to your ship, but I would dishonor the memory of Captain Shrerea, were I to abandon the defense of my vessel.”

“Very well, Captain Thisiv,” Landy said. “Captain, Thisiv, Davidson and I will remain aboard *Tovil’s Pride* and mount whatever defense we can.”

“Understood, Mr. Landy,” the Vulcan replied. “We will evacuate the remainder of the Andorians to the *Howard Hughes*.”

“In the meantime, “Mr. Davidson, Captain Thisiv and I will see what we can do about strengthening the shields.” Landy turned to Thisiv. “What kinds of weapons does your ship have?”

“Limited phasers, nothing with any real punch, I’m afraid,” the Andorian replied.

“We’ll have to make do with what we have,” she answered, then spoke back into her communicator. “Captain, we’d appreciate you keeping as many of those pirates off our backs as you can, we’re not really geared for a firefight here.”

“We shall endeavor to do so,” Sivar responded. “Good luck, Mr. Landy. *Howard Hughes* out.”

Chapter 3

Ten minutes passed by quickly. Thisiv turned out to be a moderately talented engineer and was able to restore functionality to the navigation controls that had claimed Captain Shrerea, while Landy and Davidson worked on the shields and reviewing the *Tovil's Pride's* armaments.

Landy blew out her breath. "Damn, Thisiv wasn't kidding when he said they weren't geared for a firefight. One fore and one aft phaser array, and that's it."

"Yep," Davidson replied. "Talk about bringing a knife to a gunfight."

"More like a spoon to a gunfight," Arienne snorted. "The goal here is to survive long enough for the *Howard Hughes* to scare away the marauders."

"I'd like to survive a little longer than that," the engineer replied drily. "My husband's ship is also due at Starbase 1 when we return and I haven't seen him in six weeks."

"I don't know how you managed to find the time to have a relationship, even one that's frequently separated by lightyears."

Carlie Davidson smiled. "Some things are more important than career, Arienne." Davidson was one of the few crew members with whom Arienne was relatively friendly. Perhaps because the blonde woman was an engineer and no threat to her

advancement opportunities, or that they were of a similar age and both came from Starfleet families.

However, whereas Landy's family was famous for their exploits, Davidson's parents both served on a research vessel, her father as an engineer, her mother as a science officer. Carlie was not interested in making a name for herself; rather, she chose a balance between her work and her family life.

"Not to me," Arienne replied. "My next posting should be as captain of my own vessel."

"I'm sure that you will," Carlie answered. "You might want to stop arguing with your captains, though."

"Most of my captains were morons," Arienne said angrily. "They're too timid, never taking the initiative."

"Perhaps they are aware that keeping their crew alive is one of the major duties as a captain."

"So is defending the Federation and its values," Landy scoffed.

"But at what cost? Arienne, you of all people should be aware of the risks of being in deep space," Davidson answered. "Most of us want to get back to our families at the end of the day."

"If they wanted to stay safe, they never should have joined Starfleet."

"I'm not afraid to put my life on the line, Arienne. I'm doing that right now," Carlie said, anger rising in her voice. "But neither do I want to die needlessly, just because of a captain's

ego. And as a captain, would you want the deaths of your crew on your conscience because you decided to do something stupid?”

Arienne took a breath. “No,” she conceded.

“And what would have happened to the crew and cargo of the *Tovil's Pride*, had Captain Sivar gone chasing the pirates?”

Carlie shook her head. “They’d likely be dead and the medical supplies they carried never getting to where they are needed.”

“I admit Sivar seems to be better than the other captains I have served under,” Landy said grudgingly. “And that I have learned a few things from him.”

“Then understand why he is in command of an Excelsior-class ship, and what an enormous responsibility it is for him, and for you as his first officer.” The engineer smiled. “You’re the first Lieutenant Commander ever posted as the first officer on an Excelsior-class vessel. Think about what an amazing learning opportunity it is for you when you do get your first command.”

Landy was about to respond when her communicator whistled. She took it from her belt and responded, “Landy.”

Sivar’s voice came over the communicator. “Mr. Landy, the pirate vessels are less than two minutes away. We have identified seven vessels. All are small and heavily armed.”

“Understood, Captain,” Arienne replied. “We’ve done everything we can to prepare *Tovil's Pride*. I will meet Captain

Thisiv on the bridge now. Mr. Davidson will remain here in Engineering.”

“Noted, Lieutenant Commander,” Sivar’s calm voice responded. “We will do our best to defend you and fight off the pirates. Stay alive, Mr. Landy.”

“Aye, Captain,” Landy answered. “Staying alive is a fairly high priority for me as well. Landy out.” She hooked the communicator back to her belt, then turned to Davidson.

“We’re out of time, Carlie. Keep the shields up and as much power as you can to the weapons. I’ll take the helm and Thisiv can man the phasers.”

Carlie Davidson nodded. “Yes, ma’am. Staying alive is pretty important for me as well.”

Arienne Landy turned and ran to the bridge. Thisiv had already sat at the tactical station, his left arm still immobilized in its sling, but managing with his one good arm. Landy sat at the helm. She had acted as helmswoman on several of her previous postings and was an experienced pilot.

She familiarized herself with the controls and positioned *Tovil’s Pride* several thousand kilometers away from the *Howard Hughes*. The Andorian cargo vessel was nowhere as maneuverable as the Federation battleship, so she needed to keep her out of the line of fire from the pirates.

Landy turned to Thisiv and said, “Please raise the shields, Captain.” The young Andorian looked scared, he was clearly out

of his depth. His recent promotion to captain was unexpected, as was the thought of having to command the vessel during a firefight.

“Lieutenant Command Landy, I would appreciate if you would consider taking command of *Tovil's Pride*, I simply do not have the experience in this situation,” he said. “I can handle tactical, but I am unfamiliar with commanding starship combat.”

“Very well, Mr. Thisiv,” Landy agreed. “Just fire the phasers at anything shooting at us, and rotate the shields to maintain the maximum strength you can.”

Landy turned back to her station. The pirate ships dropped out of warp and swarmed around both the Andorian and Starfleet vessels. She opened a channel to the *Howard Hughes*.

“*USS Howard Hughes*, this is Captain Landy of the Andorian cargo vessel, *Tovil's Pride*. I have assumed command at the request of Captain Thisiv. We are engaging the enemy. Landy out.”

It was her first command of a starship, albeit temporarily. Lieutenant Commander Arienne Landy just hoped it wouldn't be her last.

Chapter 4

The pirate ships were everywhere. They were small and nimble, and able to take a full phaser blast from the *Howard Hughes* without losing their shields. Their weapons packed a punch, too, as the shields fluctuated from every impact on *Torvil's Pride's* defenses.

“This thing is like trying to maneuver a whale on a beach,” Landy muttered.

“A what?” Thisiv asked. He was performing admirably at the tactical station and had scored a number of direct hits on the enemy vessels, but their shields were far too strong for the Andorian freighter’s phasers.

“A large sea creature on Earth,” Landy explained. “Never mind.” She wrestled with the controls and barely dodged a volley from one of the pirate ships.

“Ah,” the Andorian answered. “To be fair, this ship was never intended for combat.”

“Noted, Mr. Thisiv. Now let me concentrate!” Arienne replied. The ship shook as one of the enemy ships scored a direct hit to *Tovil's Pride's* aft shields.

“How are our shields holding up?” she asked.

“Not well, Captain,” Thisiv responded. “Shields are down to forty-three percent and dropping.”

A shot from the Federation vessel finally broke through the shields on one of the pirates, the small craft erupting into a fireball.

“Finally got one!” Landy exclaimed. “Only six to go!”

She touched the communicator. “Mr. Davidson, how are you going down there?” she asked.

“Not well, Captain,” the engineer replied. “I’ve got power rerouted everywhere just to keep our shields and weapons up.”

“Concentrate on shields, Carlie,” Arienne ordered. “Our weapons are more or less useless anyway.”

“If they want the cargo so badly, why are they shooting at us?” Thisiv asked.

Arienne Landy went cold. “Because they’re trying to drain our shields to board us.” She hailed the *Howard Hughes*.

“Captain Sivar, we’ve deduced that the pirates are trying to break our shields so they can beam aboard. If they take control of this vessel, then it’s all over for this fight and we will have to let them go unless we can thin out the numbers of the attacking ships.”

The Vulcan captain responded. “Noted, Captain Landy. Shields are heavily damaged on two of the enemy vessels, but the others are staying on the far side of *Torvil’s Pride* so we can’t hit them.

We can't afford to lower our shields to beam over a security team, or we will sustain heavy damage." Sivar's voice softened. "I'm afraid that if you are boarded, then you will have to repel any boarders with what you have."

"How are we supposed to do that?" Landy muttered to herself. She addressed her captain, "Aye sir, we'll do what we can. But if you could get rid of a few more of those marauders, we'd be grateful."

"We are trying, Captain. Sivar out."

Arienne hailed Engineering. "Carlie, we have a better than even chance that we're going to get some nasties try to get aboard. Put everything you can into the shields."

Another of the pirate vessels exploded as a photon torpedo from the *Howard Hughes* caught it amidships.

"Five to go," Landy yelled.

Torvil's Pride rocked violently as a phaser blast broke through the aft shield.

"Shields are down, shields are down!" Thisiv shrieked. The Andorian was terrified. Moments later, two figures materialized on the bridge. They were Nausicaans, their huge frames towering over Landy and Thisiv.

Arienne reacted instantly. She drew her phaser and shot one of the pirates before it had a chance to react. The other immediately ducked and drew his own weapon. Landy fired again, the beam narrowly missing the Nausicaan. It fired back, missing Landy

but striking the main viewscreen behind her. It exploded in a shower of sparks.

Two more pirates beamed in and started firing around the bridge. Thisiv cowered behind the tactical console, the young Andorian not even attempting to shoot back.

Landy fired another shot, hitting another of the Nausicaans in the shoulder. He spun around and fell to the floor. The first enemy had managed to sneak around the edge of the bridge when Arienne saw him. She had no time to raise her phaser before the Nausicaan aimed his own weapon at her.

She heard the buzz of phaser fire, expecting to feel the searing pain and blackness. Instead, the pirate grasped at the gaping hole in his chest and fell to the floor. Behind him stood Lt. Cmdr Davidson, her phaser pointing at the dead Nausicaan.

The last alien swung around to shoot at her, but Landy fired first and he fell dead.

“Nice timing, Mr. Davidson,” she called to the engineer.

Thisiv stood up shakily from his hiding spot and surveyed the carnage around him. His blue face was nearly white as he looked at the bodies of the dead Nausicaans lying on the bridge. He walked across to the communications station. “Captain Landy, we are being hailed by the *USS Howard Hughes*.”

“You’re the captain again now, Mr. Thisiv,” Arienne said. “On scr.. never mind,” as she looked at the ruined remains of the main viewscreen.

Captain Sivar's voice sounded across the bridge. "*Tovil's Pride*, what is your status? We have destroyed all of the pirate ships, it appears two of them had their shields down for transport."

"Howard Hughes, we were boarded by four pirates, they were Nausicaans. All of them are dead. Myself, Captain Thisiv and Lieutenant Commander Davidson were not injured in the firefight. The ship is not in good shape and will need substantial repairs to become operational."

The faintest hints of relief edges through the Vulcan's calm voice. "Good news, Mr. Landy. We'll send over a crew of engineers, and we'll ensure that Captain Thisiv gets the medical treatment for his previously obtained injuries as soon as possible. We will beam across immediately. Sivar out."

Landy turned towards the young Andorian. To her horror, the Nausicaan who had been shot in the shoulder stood behind Thisiv, his fangs bared. In his hand was a wicked Nausicaan sword, its serrated edge gleaming in the bridge's emergency lighting.

She raised her phaser, but before she could fire, he thrust it through Thisiv's back, the point emerging from his chest. Thisiv looked down at the weapon protruding from his chest before falling noiselessly to the ground. Arienne shot the pirate through the chest and ran to the Andorian.

Thisiv lay face up on the ground with the Nausicaan weapon still impaling him, blue blood running from his mouth.

"We... still... won, Lieutenant Commander," he gasped.

Arienne tried to staunch the bleeding, but she was unable to remove the serrated sword without inflicting even more damage to the Andorian.

“How is this winning?” she asked bitterly.

“The rest of... my crew... alive and well.” He coughed, more of the blue Andorian blood on his face. “The medical... supplies... safe. If... the cost... was my life... it was one worth... paying.” Thisiv shuddered and died.

A moment later, Captain Sivar and a team of engineers materialized in bright matter transfer beams. Shock registered momentarily on his face before he regained his Vulcan control over his emotions. He reached for his communicator. “This is Sivar, please send over a medical team immediately.”

Landy looked up at him, tears streaming down her face. This was not the end she had expected to this conflict. “It’s too late, Captain, he’s dead.” She peered questioningly into her captain’s face. “How did we let this happen?”

The Vulcan’s face was impassive. “Captain Thisiv performed his duty with great bravery. As did you and Lieutenant Commander Davidson,” he said. “He will be mourned, but also remembered for his sacrifice.”

“You and your damned Vulcan lack of emotion! How can you be so calm in the face of all that’s happened?” she demanded.

Sivar's voice was like a whip. "Because that is what it means to be the captain of a starship," he said sharply. "In times of turmoil and tragedy, the crew looks to you to be their strength."

He knelt down beside Landy and touched her shoulder.

"Arienne, this is the first and last lesson I can teach you for when you one day gain your own command," he said gently. "A starship is only as strong as its captain."

Chapter 5

Lieutenant Command Arienne Landy sat in the foyer outside Admiral Hanson's office. A bored-looking yeoman, sitting at a desk between the waiting lounges and the admiral's office, was working at the console in front of him without enthusiasm.

Landy had no idea why she had been summoned, but the *USS Howard Hughes* had been due to fly out of Starbase 1 that day. Its departure has been postponed after Starfleet Headquarters had requested her presence.

It had been four weeks since the incident with the Nausicaans and the Andorian cargo vessel. The *Howard Hughes* had remained with *Tovil's Pride* for several days until they could affect repairs to get her warp-capable again. An even younger Andorian by the name of Takh had assumed command of *Tovil's Pride* after the death of Thisiv.

The remaining crew revered both Thisiv and Shrrerea's bravery and mourned their sacrifices. The *Howard Hughes* then escorted her to safety in Andorian space before returning to her mission that had been interrupted by the pirate attack on the Andorian cargo vessel.

Arienne Landy had been quiet, brooding while the Federation ship had been rendering assistance to the freighter. She hadn't argued once with her Vulcan captain and had spent a lot of time over on the Andorian ship at the request of Sivar.

She knew why he had done so; for a race who eschewed emotion, Sivar was particularly sensitive to it in other races. He believed that if Arienne saw the ship return to life, it would help her cope with Thisiv's death.

She shook her head. The way in which he had died was just so meaningless. The Nausicaans had already lost. It was a last, petty action of a pirate who knew he would be killed with the action. He didn't want to be taken alive and decided to take the Andorian with him.

It had taken until the *Howard Hughes*' next mission before she returned to her usual self. Sivar, as always, took her outbursts in his stride. Despite her behavior toward him, Landy started to see a side to the Vulcan that she hadn't perceived before. His words as they sat beside Thisiv's body had stayed with her. She realized that she had begun to respect her captain.

Her ambition still nagged at her. Would she have done anything differently? Could she have prevented the Nausicaans from even boarding the Andorian ship? She was sure that had she attacked the pirate vessels before they had escaped the first time, the second firefight wouldn't have occurred, and Thisiv would have simply assumed command once they repaired their warp drives and gone on their way.

And then Landy wouldn't feel like she had Thisiv's death on her conscience.

The yeoman suddenly sat straight, shaken out of his reverie, and touched the earpiece in his ear. He looked up at Arienne.

“Lieutenant Commander Landy? The Admiral is ready to see you now.”

He stood and opened the door to Admiral Hanson’s office for her. Landy walked through and the yeoman closed it behind her. The admiral beckoned her to come forward.

“Lieutenant Commander, thank you for joining us. Please take a seat.” He gestured to the chairs in front of his desk, two of which were already occupied. Her commanding officer, Captain Sivar sat in the first chair. To her great surprise, in the first chair was her grandfather, retired Admiral Seth Landy.

“Grandfather!” she said, before remembering her protocol, and saluted to Admiral Hanson. “Arienne Landy, reporting as requested, sir!”

“Relax, Commander,” Hanson said magnanimously. “Please take a seat.”

The young Starfleet officer sat in the remaining vacant seat.

Her grandfather spoke. “Arienne, I suppose you’re wondering why I’m sitting here having a chat with Captain Sivar and Chris.” He gestured towards Hanson.

“Yes, sir.” Seth Landy had always demanded respect, and Arienne had called him “sir” for as long as she remembered.

“We’ve been discussing your future and next assignment within Starfleet. Although,” the elder Landy chuckled, “Not without some spirited conversation.”

Arienne looked at the three men, bewildered. Where was this going?

“In particular,” Seth Landy continued, “we have been discussing your first command. You handled yourself very well in that incident with the Andorians, and I’ve convinced Chris here that you are ready to take command of your own ship.”

Sivar’s emotionless mask was slipping; he was clearly not entirely happy with the course of events. “No-one doubts the capacity of Lieutenant Commander Landy. She is a fine officer if a somewhat argumentative one. I believe that she would benefit greatly from some more seasoning as the first officer before being given command of a vessel.”

“And I happen to disagree,” the retired admiral said smoothly. “I have convinced Admiral Hanson, so despite the protestations of your current commanding officer, you are being offered your first command, effective immediately.”

Arienne Landy sat stunned. This was her dream, to be in command of her own starship. But now that it was staring her in the face, she also had some doubts. Thisiv’s bloodstained face, with the Nausicaan sword sticking out of his chest swam across her vision and she forced it away.

Having her own starship was also an opportunity for her to prevent another death like the Andorian’s from happening again. She would be in command, she would make the decisions. And she would be right.

Cautiously, she said, "That is wonderful news, sir. May I ask which ship I will be commanding?"

Sivar was openly scowling now. "You have been given the USS *Montgomery*."

Arienne had never heard of it, although, of course, she was well aware of her namesake.

"What class is the *Montgomery*?" she asked. In her mind, she pictured an old Antares type research vessel or even a Hermes class scout vessel.

Admiral Hanson smiled. "It's one of the few remaining Constitution refits, the same as the *Enterprise-A* was. They're old, but they're still a hell of a ship."

"My official objection has been recorded," Sivar said. "Taking command of such a vessel while Landy is still a Lieutenant Commander is reckless. If she is to be offered a command, and I believe that she is not quite ready for that burden, it should be of a more appropriate vessel."

He looked around the table. "I understand that one of the Hiawatha type medical frigates, the *Henry Carter*, shall soon require a new captain as Commander V'Reth has just been promoted."

Seth Landy replied, "Your objection has been noted, Captain, and overruled. My granddaughter will be taking command of the *Montgomery*."

Admiral Hanson nodded. “We feel that she has sufficient capacity to command the *Montgomery*.”

He turned toward Arienne, “Lieutenant Commander Landy, report to the USS Montgomery at 0900 hours in the morning, where you will relieve Captain Rogell as her commanding officer.”

Hanson stood and saluted. “Congratulations on your first command, Captain.”

Chapter 6

The small shuttlecraft moved slowly around the hull of the Constitution-class vessel moored in Spacedock as Arienne Landy had the first inspection of her new command. The sweeping nacelles, positioned behind the main saucer, were connected to a number of cables as final pre-flight checks were performed by the engineers of Starbase 1. Her hull gleamed in the artificial light.

She turned to the pilot of the shuttle. “What did you say your name was again?”

“Jack. I mean Burton,” the young man said, stumbling over his words. He took a breath. “I mean, Ensign Jack Burton, sir!”

Arienne smiled to herself. One of the privileges of rank was scaring the hell out of fresh ensigns. “So, Ensign Jack-I-mean-Burton, you are my new helmsman?” she asked.

“Yes sir, I have just been transferred.”

“I prefer “ma’am”, Ensign,” Landy said. “Are you familiar with the Constitution and Constitution-refit vessels?”

“Not directly, ma’am,” Burton answered. “My last posting was on the *USS Arthur C. Clark*, which was a Miranda-class vessel. The helm station on the Miranda is similar to the Constitution-refit.”

The new captain nodded. “We’re still a couple of minutes early before I’m due to take command, just fly over the top of the saucer,” she said, pointing over the bridge.

“Yes, ma’am.”

Under Burton’s careful control, the shuttle slowly rose above the main hull and past the windows in the saucer. Through the windows, Landy could see some of her new crew moving inside the ship, attending to their duties.

As the shuttle crested the top of the saucer, the ship’s serial number, NCC-92864, came into view. Written above it, in smaller letters, was the name “USS Montgomery.”

Despite herself, Landy was impressed. She knew how old the Constitution-refits were now, but the ship docked in front of her had been lovingly cared for. The exploits of Captain Kirk and his crew had helped to cement the Constitutions into history.

This was no survey or research vessel. It was a warship. Even at over sixty years old, it was still a formidable ship with a name out of legend. Everyone knew of Captain Montgomery Scott, the famous chief engineer on the *USS Enterprise* and her successor with the same name and registration number.

Scott had been presumed killed at the Norpin colony after he had retired from Starfleet. Landy had done some research on her new command; she had formerly been named the *USS Brisbane*. After the disappearance of Captain Scott, she had been renamed to *Montgomery* in his honor.

“Time to dock, Mr. Burton,” she said to her pilot. It was just before 0900 hours when she would formally relieve Captain Rogell of command.

“Aye, Commander,” Burton answered as he maneuvered the shuttle towards the docking port on the edge of the saucer. With a slight bump, the ship connected and the docking clamps engaged.

A few moments later, the rear hatch of the tiny shuttle opened, and Landy stepped out. An honor guard of crew members lined the hallway from the docking port. As she emerged, the crew all leaned forward to take their first look at their new captain.

“Attention!” shouted a lieutenant in a British accent. Landy recognized him from his dossier – he was Lieutenant Arthur Jones, formerly helmsman for the *Montgomery* and newly promoted to her first officer. At his command, the rows of the *Montgomery’s* crew stiffened to attention.

She walked past them to where a Betazoid officer, wearing the rank of commander, waited for her. Beside him stood his first officer, a human lieutenant commander.

Landy stood in front of the *Montgomery’s* departing captain and saluted smartly. Commander Rogell returned her salute, his expression neutral.

Arienne dropped her salute, handed Rogell the datapad in her other hand, then stood to attention. She said to him formally, “I relieve you, Captain Rogell.”

Rogell accepted the datapad, examined the orders that declared Landy as the new captain of his vessel, before responding, "I am relieved."

He held the datapad to return to Arienne. "I hope Starfleet knows what the hell they're doing, giving you command of a ship like this at your current rank."

Landy smiled. "Of course they do. I'm ready."

The Betazoid former captain's eyes were hard. "Time will tell, Captain. I've heard of you, Landy. You're reckless, and not in a James Kirk way. I just hope that the fight you are so desperately looking for doesn't find you before you're prepared for it." He closed his eyes for a moment before opening them again. "I can feel your ego burning inside you," he said.

"Maybe I'm just not afraid to take the fight to those who threaten the Federation," Arienne replied defiantly.

"You should be, Landy. It's fear that stops you from getting your crew killed. The first time you lose someone under your command, it *will* change you."

Landy was suddenly back on the bridge of *Tovil's Pride*, the young Andorian laying dead with a Nausicaan sword through his back. "I've lost people," she said.

"But not when you were the one who gave the final orders," Rogell answered. "I read the report about the incident with the Andorians. Sivar was still ultimately responsible, and while you

may not see it, he still protected you from bearing the brunt of the guilt of losing the Andorian.”

The Betazoid locked eyes with her. “When you are in command of a starship, that falls to you. Remember that, Captain Landy.”

Before Arienne could respond further, Rogell saluted crisply, then with his first officer by his side, left the Montgomery under the command of the young lieutenant commander.

Chapter 7

Captain Arienne Landy stepped out of the turbolift on to the bridge of her first command. Her first officer, Arthur Jones, followed her. Landy had not been aboard one of the aging Constitution refit vessels before, and she looked around, interested.

Consoles surrounded the walls of the circular bridge; engineering, science, communications and tactical stations were laid out on an elevated platform accessed via the two turbolifts at the rear of the bridge, while at the front, the main viewscreen dominated the room.

The navigation and helm stations sat side-by-side near the center of the bridge, facing toward the viewscreen. Behind them sat the captain's chair. It sat vacant, beckoning to the vessel's new commanding officer.

Arienne's new crew was busy preparing for their departure from Space Dock when Jones called out sharply, "Captain on the bridge!" The bridge officers immediately stood to attention.

Landy smiled. "At ease." She gazed around the bridge at the crew. She had taken the time to go through each of their dossiers and was familiar with each of the Starfleet officers waiting for her orders.

At the helm sat Ensign Jack Burton, the young pilot who had shuttled her aboard the *Montgomery* earlier.

“Mr. Burton, are we ready for departure?” she asked him.

“Yes, sir... I mean ma’am,” he stammered.

“Relax, Ensign,” Landy said. “I’m not going to bite your head off.”

“Yes, ma’am. I mean, I didn’t think you would, ma’am.”

Arienne smiled at him before turning to the navigation station.

“Mr. D’lar, lay in a course for Vulcan.”

A young Denobulan ensign’s face arranged itself into the oversized grin customary of his species when emulating a human smile.

“Aye, Captain, laying in course for Vulcan,” he replied. Unlike the helmsman sitting to his left, D’lar appeared confident and self-assured.

“Glad to hear it, Ensign,” she answered.

Landy then addressed the comms officer, a young human woman with obvious Indian ancestral roots.

“Ensign Rajwani, please notify Starbase 1 that we will be departing presently,” the new captain said to her.

“At once, Captain,” Ensign Fatima Rajwani replied. She sat back down at her station, her communications earpiece protruding from her left ear.

At the engineering station, stood a Soldarian female, her nostrils wide on her flat face. Her tiny frame was barely four and a half feet. The seat at her console had been raised to its maximum height to allow her to access her station.

“Lieutenant Jub,” Landy addressed her chief engineer, then paused for a moment. “Is Jub your first name or your last name, Lieutenant?”

“On my planet, we only have one name, Captain,” Jub replied. “We have never seen the need to have more.”

Arienne nodded. “Just Jub it is then, Lieutenant. Is the *Montgomery* shipshape and ready for our mission?”

The Soldarian nodded and responded in a surprisingly deep voice, “Yes ma’am. Engines are at nominal, all systems reporting a status of green.”

Landy turned to Jones, who was now sitting at the Science station. “I think we are about ready to set sail, XO.”

“Yes ma’am,” the first officer replied.

Captain Landy strode across the bridge and sat in the captain’s chair. She touched the communicator on the armrest. Throughout the ship, the comms system whistled. The *USS Montgomery’s* crew complement of over five hundred beings paused in their tasks to listen to their new captain as she addressed them.

“This is Captain Arienne Landy,” she said, looking at the officers at their stations on the bridge. “As you are all no doubt

aware, I have been given command of the *USS Montgomery*, replacing Captain Rogell as at 0900 hours this morning.

“You have probably heard that I am a lieutenant commander and that this is my first command. You are no doubt wondering if I have the experience to take command of a vessel like the *Montgomery*.

“Let me head off your concerns. Yes, the *Montgomery* is my first command, and yes, I am still a lieutenant commander. Do not, however, doubt my capability to command this vessel. Most of you have heard the name Landy, most of you have heard the stories about my family and their reputation in Starfleet. The same blood runs through my veins, the same commitment to my ship and to my crew.

“What you will get from me is my very best. We will complete the missions that we have been given by Starfleet Command, we will ensure the safety of the citizens of the Federation. The galaxy can be a dangerous place and it is our mandate to keep the Federation safe against those who would challenge our way of life.

“I expect the same from you, that you will give me your very best. I ask no more of you than I demand of myself. Give me that, and there is nothing that we can’t achieve.

“We have been ordered by Starfleet Command to fly to Vulcan, where we will pick up Ambassador T’sha and take her to Vetalaria. Ambassador T’sha will be negotiating a treaty to give Vulcan access to trade routes through Vetalarian space. Our job is to ensure that she arrives safely and returns home afterward.

“We shall be departing presently. Landy out.”

Arienne switched off the communicator and turned to chief engineer, “Lieutenant Jub, have we been detached from all gantries?”

The Soldarian checked her console, then replied, “Yes ma’am, we’re clear.”

Landy then turned to Burton.

“Take us out, Ensign. Thrusters until we are clear of Starbase 1, then one-quarter impulse until we are ten thousand kilometers out.”

“Aye, Captain,” the young ensign replied with no sign of his earlier nervousness around Landy. This was his job, and he was at home when maneuvering a starship. “Engaging thrusters.”

Burton gently eased the controls and the *USS Montgomery* started to move slowly, reversing out of the massive Starbase in orbit around the Earth. Dozens of other ships of different designs were docked inside the huge structure, but the *Montgomery*’s gleaming white hull was an impressive sight.

A few moments later, the Constitution-refit starship exited through the open doorway. With skill belying his young age, Burton expertly turned the ship on its axis until it faced open space.

“We have cleared Spacedock, disengaging thrusters, impulse engines now at one-quarter impulse,” Burton announced.

Gracefully, the *Montgomery* coasted away from the Earth, which rapidly shrank behind them. When it reached the warp jump point, the helmsman turned to the captain and said, “We are ten thousand kilometers from Starbase 1, Captain.”

“Warp Factor 7 to Vulcan, Mr. Burton,” Landy said. The new captain took one last look around the bridge at her crew, then commanded, “Engage.”

In a blur of warp lines, the old starship accelerated away and was gone.

Chapter 8

Arienne Landy sat in her ready room, a datapad in her hand as she perused the last reports the section chiefs had filed with the former captain prior to her taking command of the *Montgomery*. It was clear that, while fairly young, the crew were capable and committed. There were very few incident reports or disciplinary action. The Betazoid captain knew how to run his ship.

Her ship, she reminded herself. It had all happened so fast. Not even twenty-four hours earlier, she was still the first officer of the *USS Howard Hughes*, with no inkling as to why she had been summoned to Admiral Hanson's office.

Now, here she was in the captain's ready room, *her* ready room, on a heavy cruiser, looking over reports regarding her crew. She was directly responsible for the lives and careers of the full complement of five hundred and twenty-two Starfleet personnel aboard the *Montgomery*.

Of course, the Excelsior-class ship she had just served on had a crew of seven hundred and fifty, but she wasn't their captain. Even though she had made many command decisions as first officer, the responsibility of its outcome always fell to Sivar.

She tossed the datapad on to the desk in front of her and rubbed her eyes. She would never admit it to anyone, but she felt woefully underprepared for commanding a vessel of this size. The weight of the responsibility started to feel heavy on her shoulders.

Her ambition resolved and she put her fear to one side. If she could get on top of that self-doubt, she would quickly get promoted to commander and then look at command of something more prestigious than a fifty-year-old starship. Maybe a newer Excelsior class, like the *Howard Hughes*.

She would just have to impress Starfleet command over the next six months, and that possibility might come to pass. However, if she were to command this vessel, she would need to become more familiar with her, how she ran, what her capabilities were.

She had, of course, read through her specifications, and for her age, she still packed quite a punch. Ten phaser banks with sixteen emitters, two forward and one aft photon torpedo launchers. She had a cruising speed of Warp 7 with a maximum safe speed of Warp 9.2. Even by modern standards, the warship still earned her classification as a heavy cruiser.

Arienne picked up the datapad again, then put it back on the desk. Technical specifications and crew evaluations were useful, but she needed to learn more about her crew and her ship if they were to be the tool for advancing her Starfleet career.

She straightened her uniform, stepped out of her ready room and headed to the bridge, where Lieutenant Jones sat in the captain's chair as the officer of the watch. *Montgomery's* first officer looked up when the turbolift doors opened and stood when he saw Landy walked on to the bridge.

"Relax, XO," Landy told him. "Pretend I'm not here, I just want to observe my bridge crew on duty." She sat at the currently unoccupied tactical station.

Jones sat back down in the captain's chair. "Aye, Captain," he said. He turned to Ensign D'lar at the navigation station.

"Time to Vulcan, Mr. D'lar?" he asked.

"Sir, we have picked up a severe ion storm on long-range sensors," the Denobulan replied. "We will have to divert around it. Even if we increase to our maximum recommended speed of Warp 9.2, it will take an additional eight hours to navigate around it safely and arrive at Vulcan in approximately thirty-one hours."

"Damn, that's a big storm," the first officer muttered. "Very well, we'll just have to be late."

He addressed the communications officer. "Fatima, contact Vulcan and notify Ambassador T'Sha that we will be arriving late, which will delay our trip to Vetalaria. I'm afraid that the treaty negotiations will be delayed."

"Aye, sir," the elegant Indian woman replied.

"Just a moment, please, Ensign," Landy interjected. She fumed at the idea of screwing up her very first mission in command.

She touched the communicator and hailed Jub, *Montgomery's* chief engineer. "Lieutenant Jub, what is the risk of pushing the engines to Warp 9.5?" she asked.

"Not recommended, Captain," the Soldarian replied in her deep voice. "On a newer vessel, we could maybe push into the unsafe zone, but Starfleet strongly advises against it on the Constitution refits, as it poses extreme risk on a ship of this age."

“But we can do it?”

“I would have to override half a dozen different safeties, but yes, ma’am, it is possible.”

“Make it so, Lieutenant,” Landy ordered. A few moments later, the hum through the deck plating became more pronounced.

“Warp Factor 9.5, Captain,” Burton announced. “I don’t know how long we can hold at this speed, though.”

“Noted,” Landy said confidently. Better to push the ship a little bit and arrive on time. Starfleet’s recommendations were always on the cautious side, and she didn’t have time to mess about.

She turned to the navigation station. “Mr. D’lar, can we get in a bit closer to the ion storm? If we pass through its outer edge, we should be able to shave off some time and not appreciably increase the danger.”

“Perhaps at Warp 5 or 6, Captain,” D’lar answered. “At Warp 9.5, the risk increases significantly.”

“Get as close as you can.” She examined the tactical console in front of her. It was similar enough to the Constellation-class vessel she had served on previously. “I can engage the shields from here, which should protect us from the worst of the magnetic interference,” Arienne said.

D’lar paused for a second, before replying, “Yes, ma’am.” The warp field in front of them shifted slightly to port in response to the adjusted course. “Estimated arrival time to Vulcan now twenty-two hours, fifty-six minutes.”

“That’s better,” Landy said. “Time to the edge of the ion storm?”

“Twenty-eight minutes, Captain,” the Denobulan navigation officer answered.

“Thank you, Ensign.” Arienne Landy was pleased with herself. She could have made up the time on the voyage to Vetalaria from Vulcan, but she would still have to explain why she was late arriving to pick up the Ambassador. It was worth the small risk she was taking to ensure a perfect first mission.

The hum through the deck plating started to become more pronounced as the *Montgomery* started to vibrate under the strain her new captain had placed on her.

Chapter 9

The ion storm filled the main view screen. It was huge. No wonder it would have caused such a lengthy delay to their journey had they simply circumvented it, Landy thought to herself.

She couldn't help but wonder what her old Captain aboard the *Howard Hughes* would have done. Actually, she didn't need to wonder at all. He would have taken the slower trip around and accepted the delay. But he was a captain with decades of experience, whereas she was a lieutenant commander on her first mission in her first command.

She couldn't afford to be seen to be incapable of performing such a simple mission as this one.

"Two minutes out from the leading edge of the storm, Captain," Jones reported. He had swapped places with Arienne; she now sat in the captain's chair, while Jones manned the tactical station.

"Shields up, Lieutenant," Arienne ordered.

"Aye, ma'am, shields up," the first officer acknowledged. Jones was not happy. He felt that Landy's actions were reckless and needlessly endangered the crew. Captain Rogell would never have taken such a risk, but he kept his mouth shut, not wishing to undermine his new captain. He wasn't sure how responsive she was to criticism from her first officer, and now wasn't the time to find out.

“Mr. D’lar, keep us right on the outer edge of the storm, let’s not get too close,” Landy said.

“Aye, Captain,” D’lar answered. The old ship was vibrating badly now under the strain of high warp and as ionically charged particles started to bombard the shields.

Her communicator whistled, and she touched a button on the arm of her chair.

“Captain, this is Jub,” the chief engineer’s voice echoed through the bridge. “The intake manifolds are starting to overheat. I recommend that we drop back down to Warp 7 until we are clear of the storm.”

Arienne Landy did some mental arithmetic. It would still put them several hours behind schedule.

“Negative, Jub,” she replied. “Keep an eye on them and if we start to get critically hot, we can ease off then.”

“Yes, Captain,” the Soldarian said, clearly unhappy with the order.

“Keep those shields at maximum, Mr. Jones. We don’t need any of those ionic particles impacting on our warp nacelles.”

“Doing my best, ma’am,” he replied. “But keeping the shields up is also putting more strain on the warp core.” His “we should slow down or go around,” hanging unsaid in the air.

Landy ignored it. “How long before we are clear of the storm?”

“Three hours, eleven minutes,” Jones answered.

“She’ll hold together until then.”

The *Montgomery* held together for exactly one hour and fifty-four minutes when the ship shuddered violently and sparks erupted from the tactical station. Arthur Jones dived for the floor and narrowly missed the entire console exploding in his face. Another explosion emanated from the rear of the bridge and the *Montgomery* listed to starboard as main power failed.

Red emergency lighting dispelled the darkness as Landy picked herself up off the floor. She smacked the communicator button on her chair.

“Engineering, report!” she barked.

“Warp core is offline,” Jub replied a moment later. “The intake manifolds overheated and half a dozen circuits blew.”

“I thought I told you to keep an eye on them!” Landy shouted.

“I did, Captain,” the Soldarian replied. “The manifolds went from borderline to critical in a matter of moments, there was no time to shut down the warp core before everything went offline.”

“Shields are down also, Captain,” Jones said. He had moved to the Science station, little remained of the tactical station. “We are drifting closer to the ion storm.” He rechecked his instruments. “Correction, the storm is moving this way and enveloping us.”

“Jub, how long before we can restore warp power and shields?”

"At least an hour, Captain. We took heavy damage here. It's a miracle that we didn't lose one or both warp nacelles."

"Get those shields up as a priority, the ionic particles are going to strip the hull plating and cause havoc with the rest of the systems without them."

"Aye, Captain. Engineering out."

Landy cursed. She looked around the bridge at her young crew, barely visible under the faint emergency lighting. They were clearly scared and looking to her for strength and instruction.

She was painfully aware that she had messed up and badly. She was still going to be hours late for her rendezvous with the Vulcan ambassador, but now with a damaged ship.

She pressed the communicator again, "Medical, what's our situation? Did we sustain any casualties?"

Dr. Michael van Noonan answered, "Some cuts and bruises and a broken wrist from the sudden deceleration, Captain. No casualties."

Arienne blew a sigh of relief. At least nobody had died because of her impatience.

"Take care of the wounded, Doctor. Landy out."

She turned to the bridge crew. "All right, check your stations. It looks like we're going to be stuck here for a little while, and that ion storm is closing around us."

“Fatima,” she addressed the communications officer. “Please notify Ambassador T’Sha that we are going to be delayed.” She gritted her teeth. “Notify them of our status, and that if we can’t get our shields up soon, we may be in need of assistance.”

“Aye, Captain,” Rajwani replied.

She depressed the communicator button once more. “Lieutenant Jub, we’ve sustained damage to the bridge, can you spare someone to repair our tactical console?”

“Not a chance, Captain,” Jub replied. “I’m going to need every pair of hands I have to get the shields and warp drive back up.”

Ensign D’lar spoke up. “Captain, I have engineering experience, if I can rustle up the required parts, I can fix the damage to the bridge.”

“Make it so, Ensign,” Landy replied. She spoke back into the communicator.

“Looks like we can handle it,” she said to Jub.

“Great. I’ll let you know when something is actually working. Jub out.”

Arienne turned to her first officer. “A word in my ready room, Lieutenant?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Jones answered. They both stood up and exited the bridge.

Chapter 10

"I screwed up, Lieutenant," Landy said once they were both seated in her ready room.

"On a scale of one to ten, I'd definitely call this one about an eleven," Arthur Jones replied.

"I should have listened to my crew, you know this ship better than I do, but I decided to try to be a hero. Instead, I came out as a fool."

"Yes, Captain, you did." Jones decided that now was the time for the candor he had withheld earlier. And wished he hadn't. "You've managed to disable your ship by taking unnecessary risks and gained absolutely no advantage from it." His voice was harsh.

"I see I don't need to give you permission to speak frankly, Lieutenant,"

Arthur Jones lowered his eyes. "Sorry for my forthrightness, Captain. I know we've just met and you don't know me, but I've been on this ship for a long time now, with this crew. I care a lot about them. As first officer, it's my duty to tell the captain when I think she's wrong."

He looked up again, meeting her gaze. "I'd never gainsay you in front of the crew, but I'd be failing in my job if I didn't speak frankly in private. I don't know how you run a ship, but yes, I should have asked you for permission first."

Landy said dryly. "I doubt I would have given it had you asked before all this happened." She shook her head. "That would also have been a mistake."

"Thank you, Captain," Arthur's features softened. "I know you feel you have a lot to prove. Yes, your family is well known and I'm sure you have put yourself under a lot of pressure to live up to their name. My biggest fear is that you're going to end up like both of your parents and taking this crew with you."

He was right, and they both knew it.

"How do I fix this, Arthur? You know the crew, you know this vessel. I need to get them to trust me and so far I've given them exactly no reason to."

"Shit, Captain, I just got promoted to be a first officer for the first time in my career, and you're asking *me* for advice?" he laughed ironically. "All right, how about you stop thinking about your career, and start thinking about your ship and your crew?"

Arienne opened her mouth to argue, then closed it again. She badly needed a lifeline right now, and she wasn't going to get it without having her crew behind her.

"Fair call," she said simply.

"This is a good crew, and I've served with most of them since I was assigned to the *Montgomery* two years ago. Some have declined transfers to stay aboard her. She's an old ship, but she's tough and we're pretty damned fond of her."

Jones looked her directly in the eyes, “If you’ll give her a chance, she’ll look after you. But you need to look after her, too. As her captain, you are the one who has to decide how to treat her.”

Arienne considered Arthur’s words. Jones was almost exactly the same age as she was, although his rise through the ranks had been slower than her own. In that time, he had somehow managed to gain some wisdom that she had not.

“I didn’t know you before I took command, Mr. Jones. When Captain Rogell and Commander Walthers were reassigned, I didn’t really care who my first officer would be. Rogell recommended you, I took his recommendation without thinking twice about it.”

Landy met his gaze. “As it turned out, I gained myself a fine first officer. I hope that I can be a captain worthy of him.”

“You’ll do all right, Captain,” Jones replied. “Just stop trying to make Admiral before you’re thirty and we might all live long enough for you to get there one day. But first, can we please get the hell out of here?”

“Sounds like a plan, Lieutenant. Let’s get back to the bridge and see if we can scrape the ship back together.”

They started to head towards the bridge when the dim emergency lighting was replaced with the bright main lighting. Landy and Jones looked at each other. “She’s coming back to life, Captain,” Arthur smiled. They hurried to the turbolift.

As they stepped on to the bridge they saw D'lar had managed to somehow acquire the parts he needed to fix the tactical console. His feet stuck out from underneath it. Burton stood beside him, passing him tools as he asked for them.

Arienne smacked the comms button on the captain's chair and hailed Engineering.

"Lieutenant Jub, I see you managed to get main power on sooner than you expected. Great work."

"I've got more hacks than repairs, Captain," the *Montgomery's* chief engineer responded in a surly voice. "We're still a few minutes away from having the shields up and half an hour from getting warp drive operational, but we've started reinitializing the warp core."

"Do we have impulse engines?"

"Yes, Captain, but one-third impulse is all we have available."

"It will do, Lieutenant. Let me know when we have shields and warp drive. Landy out." She terminated the communication.

"Mr. Burton, I'll take the helm while you are assisting D'lar," she said.

"Not necessary, Captain," D'lar said as he emerged from under the tactical console. "It should be operational again now." He sealed the panel underneath and the console came to life.

"Excellent work, Ensign," Landy said. "Hopefully, Jub will have those shields up soon."

Arienne then turned to Burton. “Jack, take us toward the outer edge of the ion storm, wherever will get us out of here the fastest. One-third impulse, let’s not break anything else,” Arienne said to her helmsman.

“Aye, ma’am.” Burton returned to his station. A moment later, the ship turned and started to move away from the massive storm.

“The storm is moving faster than we are, Captain, but we’re at least slowing our descent into it.”

“Noted, Ensign,” Landy replied.

The comm whistled and Jub’s voice could be heard. “Captain, shields are now available again at sixty percent. As long as we don’t get any big hits, we should be able to hold it at that until we regain warp drive.”

“Keep us informed, Lieutenant.”

Landy looked at D’lar and said, “Since you did the repairs, you can have the honors of engaging the shields, Ensign.”

“Aye, Captain, engaging shields.” The Denobulan sat at the newly repaired console. “Shields now activated and holding steady at sixty percent.”

Arienne Landy blew out a sigh of relief. While still unable to leave the ion storm, the shields would now prevent any further damage to the ship while the engineers completed repairs sufficiently to get underway.

Repairs that were necessary because of her own arrogance and ambition. She has put her ship and her crew at significant risk, and for no good reason. They could easily have made up the time lost to the delay on the leg of their journey to the Vetalarian system.

She had treated her crew badly and nearly got them all killed. Images of the young Andorian who had died aboard *Tovil's Pride* swam across her vision. What if someone had died because of her actions? How could she live with that?

No. She needed to reassess her priorities. Captain Sivar had tried time and again to teach her the importance of the crew's safety, and she had thought him weak for it.

Landy finally understood just how good a captain Sivar had been, and how her own captaincy so far had been in contrast with it. She needed to face the consequences of her poor behavior, even if it cost her her command.

In the meantime, she needed to try to repair the burning remains of her reputation with her crew. Whether or not she remained their captain once she returned to Starfleet, she was their captain now.

She once again touched the comms button and addressed the entire crew.

"This is Arienne Landy. I don't call myself Captain right now, because I haven't acted as one. I haven't earned the title. Through my own actions, the *Montgomery* has sustained heavy damage and very nearly killed us all.

“For that, I apologize to you all. I take full responsibility for what has happened and will ensure that Starfleet Command knows that you all acted properly and in the manner befitting members of Starfleet.

“If I were possible, I would like to start again. But the time is past for that. There is no second chance to make a first impression. But if I could go back to the beginning, I would say this to you instead:

“My name is Arienne Landy, and I have been given the honor to serve as your captain. In time, I hope to earn your trust and respect.

“I’m young and this is my first command. I have a lot to learn, and I hope to learn from you. You all have a lot to teach me, and I am willing to learn.

“The *USS Montgomery* is a proud ship, named for one of those most distinguished members of Starfleet. She may be fifty years old, but she is formidable and deserves respect, especially from her captain. You as her crew deserve that same respect.

“That is what I would say to you if I could start again,” she said simply. “I’m not sure if I will still be in command once this is all over,” she continued. “But for the remainder of my tenure as captain of the *Montgomery*, I swear to you that I will get you home safely. Landy out.” She shut off the comms.

Landy looked around the bridge at her senior officers. All of them returned her gaze. Her eyes locked with those of her first officer, who gave her a crooked grin.

“Let’s get the hell out of here, Captain,” he said.

Chapter 11

Landy stood once more in Admiral Hanson's office in Starfleet Headquarters. The *Montgomery* had limped into Vulcan space, where the Vulcans had assisted Jub and her engineering team in affecting the remainder of the repairs. The damage was not as bad as first thought, but bad enough. They had arrived at Vulcan sixteen hours later than they had planned.

Ambassador T'Sha was stoic in true Vulcan fashion. She had contacted Vetalaria via subspace communications, and by good fortune, the Vetalarian ambassador had been delayed by two days, caught up in his previous negotiations. Once the repairs had been completed on the *Montgomery*, they arrived at Vetalaria with several hours to spare.

The negotiations had gone smoothly, and the *Montgomery* returned the Vulcan ambassador home two days later before setting a course back to Earth.

The irony of the whole sequence of events was not lost on Arienne. Had she followed the safe course of action, they would have had more than enough time, even with traveling at Warp 6 to circumvent the ion storm. The universe, it seemed, was going to make this lesson one to remember.

Her former captain, Sivar, and her grandfather, retired Admiral Seth Landy, were again present. And like the last time, she didn't know what was going to happen.

She had sent a detailed report while repairs were being performed at Vulcan. The report was brutally honest as she took full responsibility for what had happened and her opinion of her own actions in hindsight. Arienne was careful to highlight how the efforts of her crew to restore power to the *Montgomery* had averted the likelihood of even more damage or lives lost.

For the first time in her career, Arienne realized just how much she had still to learn, and stood stiffly at attention, ready to accept the consequences of her arrogance.

Admiral Hanson spoke first, holding up a datapad.

“Lieutenant Commander Landy, I have here your report of the incident on your mission to Vulcan and Vetalaria. The testimony you have given against yourself is damning.”

“Yes, sir.”

“In your favor, you are acknowledging that as captain, you are responsible for anything that happens to your ship.” Hanson leaned forward. “This is right and proper, and as it should be.”

“Yes, sir,” Arienne repeated.

“The damage to the *Montgomery* was quite extensive. It’s a miracle that no-one was killed. Pushing your ship past the recommended emergency top speed is only acceptable under extreme circumstances. Taking it to the boundary of an ion storm while exceeding its recommended top speed is reckless.”

“Yes, sir. It was, sir.”

“Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t relieve you of command immediately and demote you back to lieutenant,” Hanson said, his eyes flashing.

Arienne didn’t flinch. “I can’t, Admiral. What I did was stupid and petty, and for reasons that in hindsight make no sense whatsoever. I am prepared to accept whatever punishment you see fit.”

She stepped forward. “However, all I ask is that my crew, that is, the crew of the *Montgomery*, not face any disciplinary action for what has happened. The fault is entirely mine, and I take complete responsibility for everything.”

Seth Landy spoke. “Arienne, it might surprise you to know that during your return voyage to Earth, we received several submissions, requesting leniency. One was from your first officer, Lieutenant Arthur Jones. We also received one from your chief engineer, a Lieutenant Jub, and,” he peered at the datapad, “one Ensign Jack Burton. In fact, every one of your senior officers spoke on your behalf.”

He looked at his granddaughter. “Despite the actions you took in the first place, the way you handled yourself in the face of the crisis earned you at least a modicum of respect from your crew.”

“Nevertheless,” Hanson said, “You acted improperly, and risked both a valuable starship and her crew. I now have to make a decision about what to do with you.”

Captain Sivar, who had sat quietly during the exchange, looked at Admiral Hanson.

“Admiral,” he said quietly. “While I was opposed to offering command to Lieutenant Commander Landy while still so young and inexperienced, it is my recommendation that she retains her position as the captain of the *USS Montgomery*.”

Arienne looked at him in surprise. Sivar was the last person she would have expected to defend her.

“While Lieutenant Commander Landy was my first officer aboard the *USS Howard Hughes*, I saw the capacity to make a fine captain one day. The one thing that she needed to learn above all else was humility.

“She has stood here today in front of us, accepting responsibility for her actions and defending her crew from repercussions that were the result of her mistakes. Her actions were undoubtedly an error in judgment. A serious one, to be sure, but there was no intent of malice.

“As retired Admiral Landy has also mentioned, her crew was prepared to speak on her behalf. The majority of their time with Lieutenant Commander Landy was after the incident in the ion storm, where it seems to me that she learned a valuable lesson.”

He looked at Arienne, then back at Hanson.

“I believe during the remainder of the mission, the real Captain Arienne Landy finally emerged. She put aside her ambition, she put aside her ego. She trusted her crew and she respected her vessel. Are these not the attributes we value in Starfleet captains?”

He steepled his fingers and leaned back in his chair. "The logical course of action is for the Lieutenant Commander to continue to refine those attributes as captain of the USS Montgomery."

Seth Landy smoothly entered the discussion. "I will admit that I pushed hard for my granddaughter to be offered this command, and in hindsight, I may also have been hasty and arrogant. But it seems to me that if her former commanding officer is recommending for her to retain it, even after raising his objections in the first place, then we should listen to his advice."

Admiral Hanson turned to Arienne. "Lieutenant Commander, I am still less than impressed with your actions and formal reprimand will be entered into your service record, but I will yield to the advice of Captain Sivar and retired Admiral Landy.

"I expect you to be back aboard the USS Montgomery by 0900 hours in the morning and ready for your next mission." He stood, and the others followed.

"Dismissed, Captain."

Arienne Landy turned on her heel and stepped smartly out of his office.

Chapter 12

Captain Sivar emerged from Hanson's office a few minutes later, where Arienne greeted him.

"A moment, sir," she said as she walked toward him.

"Of course, Captain," Sivar replied. Landy fell into step as they walked along the corridor.

"Sir, I wanted to thank you for what you did in there," she said. "I wasn't the easiest to get along with while under your command, and God knows why you didn't throw me out on my backside."

"You mean apart from having to weather the ire of your grandfather," the Vulcan said dryly.

Arienne started. "Well..."

"Relax, Arienne," Sivar said, with almost the hint of a smile. He had spent too much time around humans, he mused to himself. "I kept you as my first officer because I could see the promise in you that you failed to see yourself."

"Oh, of course, you always saw yourself as a captain, but you didn't see what kind of captain. You didn't care, just so long as you were in command."

He stopped at a junction in the corridor and turned to look at her. "I hoped to teach you this lesson while you were under my

command, but it seems that it was one you had to learn from your own experience, rather than mine.”

Arienne absorbed that statement for a moment. “Wait,” she said. “So you...”

“Yes,” Sivar said. “When I was young, I was headstrong and arrogant. I wanted to get my first command as quickly as I could. When it finally happened, through my own recklessness, I lost a member of my crew.”

He bowed his head. “It was then that I vowed to ensure the safety of my ship and my crew to the best of my ability.”

Sivar touched Landy’s shoulder and looked into her eyes.

“Arienne, as the captain of a Starfleet vessel, sometimes, we have to take risks. Sometimes, it leads to the loss of those under our command.

“The lesson I needed you to learn is that there are times to take risks, and there are times when you don’t.”

Landy paused. “After the incident with the Andorian vessel, *Tovil’s Pride*, you said to me that the first and last lesson you wanted to teach me is that a ship is only as strong as its captain.

“I was a fool, thinking you were weak when you took the safer course of action to look after your ship and crew. On the contrary, you showed strength by doing so. I didn’t recognize it then, but I do now.

“Thisiv, that young Andorian, he was captain of his ship for barely several hours, but in that time, he was more of a captain that I was when I took command of the *Montgomery*.”

Arienne sighed, “If I can be half the captain he was one day, I will be proud.” She smiled at the Vulcan captain. “And if I can be a tenth the captain that you are, sir, then I might just be okay.”

Sivar held out his hand in a very human gesture. “Good luck, Captain Landy. Although I get the feeling that you might not need it anymore.” He turned and walked away, leaving Landy alone with her thoughts.

Arienne Landy stepped on to the bridge of the *USS Montgomery* and sat in the captain’s chair. She touched the armrest; there was a mark on the leather, and she tried to wipe it away with her finger.

She realized that the mark was because the fabric had worn through under the hands of many captains who had sat in this very same chair before, commanded the old vessel that was now in her care.

The *Montgomery* was old, but she was tough. So was her crew.

Her captain? Time would tell, she thought to herself.

“Mr. D’lar, set a course for the Onta system,” she addressed her navigator. “Warp five.”

The Denobulan touched the console in front of him.

“Aye, Captain, setting course for the Onta system,” he said.

“Engage, Mr. Burton,” she commanded the helmsman.

“Yes, ma’am,” the young ensign said.

The old ship disappeared in a blur of warp lines.

About the Author

Jane Stockwell holds a first class honors degree in computer science and received an Australian Postgraduate Award scholarship for a Ph.D. in 2006. She has published several articles in international peer-reviewed academic journals, none of which are particularly interesting.

Jane was born and raised in Queensland, Australia, where she currently lives, reads and listens to music with her partner Benedict and two children.

Author Profile:

Author home page at <https://janestockwell.com>

[Jane Stockwell on Goodreads](#)

Other books by this author:

[The Map in the Fortune Cookie](#)

[Be Kind to Yourself](#)

Other Star Trek Fan-Fiction:

[USS Montgomery](#)