

# ***STAR TREK***

## **USS Montgomery**



Fan Fiction

**Jane Stockwell**

# Chapter 1

The bridge of the *USS Montgomery* shook again. Lieutenant Commander Arienne Landy, her captain, flicked the communicator switch on her console.

“Mr. D’lar,” she addressed her chief engineer. “Any idea when those inertial dampers will stabilize?”

“Sorry, Captain,” the young Denobulan engineer replied. “I thought I already had it under control. Give me a few minutes.”

“Understood. Give it your best shot.” She shut the communicator off.

Landy couldn’t grouch too much at her crew. Lieutenant D’lar was a fine engineer, and for the most part, he kept the ship named for the most famous engineer of all, patched together. The Constitution refits were old now, very old, and only young and inexperienced captains such as herself ended up in command of them.

The *Montgomery* was her first command, and she would probably be the old ship’s last captain.

She looked over to her navigation officer, Ensign Jack Burton. “Mr. Burton, how far away are we from Starbase 1?” Landy already knew the answer, but part of her role as captain was to train her very young crew.

“Umm, checking now,” Burton answered, followed with a belated “Captain.” After a few moments of scanning his console, he said, “49 hours, 23 minutes at Warp 5, ma’am.”

Landy nodded. “Thank you, Ensign.” Two days before the old ship would arrive back home and get some much-needed repairs while in spacedock. Her crew was doing their best, but parts were hard to come by for the old girl and they’d depleted their spares.

She hoped that the *Montgomery* would make its way back out of spacedock, hers was one of the very few remaining Constitution refits still in Starfleet service, but she far preferred it to the slightly newer Miranda-class. She loved the Constitution-class; even though they were old, they were still a formidable ship.

Assuming they held together.

Landy looked across to her first officer, Lieutenant Arthur Jones. “I’ll be in my ready room, XO. Call me if anything comes up.”

“Right you are, Cap’n!” answered Jones cheerily in a British accent. As she vacated the captain’s chair, he stood up from the Science Officer’s station and took her place there. Jones was a good first officer and well-liked by the crew.

As was Landy. She’d been given command of the *Montgomery* some eight months earlier when she had been first officer on the *USS Howard Hughes*, an early Excelsior-class ship. She had been thrilled when she had been tipped to command her first ship and she tried to follow the example of her old captain, Commander Sivar.

The Vulcan had taught her to keep a check over her emotions and to try to view any situation logically. She made sure that the ship ran with a “no blame” culture – when things went wrong, the first priority was to fix it, then to put processes in place to ensure it didn’t happen again. Her young crew responded well to this approach and the ship ran smoothly for the most part.

She sat down at her desk in the ready room and started to peruse the reports from her department heads. Crew evaluations were always due before they entered space dock; promotions were actioned while they were in their home port and were dependent on her recommendations.

After only a few minutes, her comm whistled. She reached over and flicked it on. “Yes, XO?”

Barton’s voice came over the speaker. “Sorry to disturb you, Captain, but we’ve picked up a distress signal from a Federation research vessel. Their warp drive is inoperative.”

“On my way. Call D’lar and have him come to the bridge.”

“Aye, Captain.”

A few moments later Landy reached the bridge and sat in the captain’s chair. “Mr. Rajwani,” she addressed her comms officer, “Details, please.”

Ensign Fatima Rajwani turned away from her console and faced the captain. “Ma’am, the *Walther Raleigh* is an Antares-class survey ship, they report they have lost warp drive in between

systems. Life support is still active, but without warp, they're a long way from anything."

Landy pursed her lips. "Good Lord, an Antares-class! That's even older than the *Montgomery*. Are there any other Federation ships in range?"

"Negative, Captain."

"Well, we'd better hope that Mr. D'lar can keep us from falling apart a while longer."

The door to the turbolift opened at that moment, and the Denobulan chief engineer stepped out onto the bridge.

"Perfect timing, Mr. D'lar," Landy smiled. "It seems that we might need to keep the *Montgomery* in space a little while longer. Are we up for that, Lieutenant?"

"Yes, ma'am," the Denobulan responded confidently. "I've tracked down the issue with the inertial dampers now, so we shouldn't have any more problems for a few days."

"I'll take you at your word, Mr. D'lar, let's see what assistance we can offer. We'll need you to try to get another old boat flying." Landy turned back to her communications officer. "Mr. Rajwani, please signal the Walther Raleigh and inform them that we are on our way. Mr. Burton," she addressed the young ensign at the navigation console, "Set a course to intercept, Warp Factor 4."

"Aye Captain, setting course. We should arrive at the *Walther Raleigh*'s location in two hours."

“Call me when we drop out of warp, XO,” Landy said to Jones as she stood up and returned to her ready room.

## Chapter 2

The *Montgomery* flashed out of warp two hundred thousand kilometers away from the stranded *Walther Raleigh*. Captain Landy had returned to the bridge a few minutes beforehand so she could assess the situation. It seemed fairly routine, especially for a ship as old as the one they were now approaching at low impulse.

“Mr. Rajwani, please hail the Walther Raleigh and ask what assistance they feel is most urgent. Mr. D’lar, prepare a small away team but hold over on beaming across until we know where to focus our efforts.”

“Captain, I have a Dr. Westfield from the *Walther Raleigh* answering our hail,” reported the communications officer.

“On screen, Ensign.”

A moment later, a rotund, dirty and very sweaty human male appeared on the main viewer. Landy stepped forward and addressed the screen.

“Dr. Westfield. I’m Captain Arienne Landy of the *USS Montgomery*. How may we assist?”

“Captain Landy, thank you for answering our distress call. I must apologize for my appearance, life support has been on nominal while we attempt to repair our warp core, and each of us has had a go at repairs. Sadly, we are scientists and not engineers and the damage is beyond our capabilities.”

“Wait. Doctor, are you saying you went into space without an engineer for your vessel?” asked, mollified.

“Dr. Shoolen has an engineering background, but rather more from an, erm, academic perspective. He used to teach engineering at Starfleet Academy.”

“I remember him, he was teaching while I was at the Academy as a cadet,” Landy replied. “Andorian, tall, went on and on?”

Dr. Westfield smiled. “Yes, that’s him, Captain.” He then looked quizzically at Landy. “You must be very young, Captain, Shoolen was teaching at the Academy ten years ago for about five years. Are you sure you and your crew have the experience to fix a ship as old as ours? It must be older than you.”

Landy laughed, “Doctor, *my* ship is older than me, but that doesn’t prevent me from being in command of her. I also happen to have a very capable chief engineer, who is even younger than me.”

“Very well, Captain, my apologies if I was disrespectful to you and your crew.”

“Think nothing of it, Doctor. Now, it seems as though your most pressing issue is repairing your warp core and getting your life support back up to full efficiency. You and your crew are welcome to come aboard the Montgomery while the repairs are underway. We have cool air, hot showers, and decent food. How many crew members are there aboard?”



“That sounds wonderful, Captain. There are five of us aboard; myself, Dr. Shoolen, who you know, Dr. Gasna, she is a Lorillian, Dr. Haenfir, he’s a Tellarite and T’sor, who is Vulcan. A veritable Federation of our own aboard!” Westfield smiled expansively.

“Indeed, Doctor,” Landy replied.

“Dr. Shoolen shall remain aboard to assist your chief engineer. If nothing else, he may be able to learn some things from a practical perspective. The student teaching the teacher, as it were.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Landy turned to her first officer. “You have the conn, Mr. Jones. I’ll transport across to the *Raleigh* with Lieutenant D’lar and the away team.”

“Aye, Captain,” the British officer replied. “I’ll try to keep this old bucket of bolts together while you go fix that one,” he said with a smile.

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Dr. Shoolen and Dr. Westfield stood waiting in the *Walther Raleigh’s* transporter room when Landy, her chief engineer and the rest of the away team from the *Montgomery* materialized on the transport pads. Westfield stepped forward with a beaming smile to greet them.

“Captain Landy, so nice to meet you!” he exclaimed. “I believe you already know my colleague here,” gesturing to Shoolen.

“The pleasure is mine,” Landy replied, shaking Westfield’s hand. She turned to Shoolen, “Good to see you again, Doctor. I’m not sure if you remember me, but I was one of your students at the Academy.”

The blue Andorian reached out his hand, a crooked smile on his face as his head antennae twitched slightly. “I most certainly do, Captain. You were a rather cheeky final year cadet when last we met. You had a penchant for falling asleep in my classes as I recall.”

Landy’s face flushed. “I’m sorry, Doctor. I wasn’t always the most attentive student.”

“Attentive? No. But talented. You still passed my courses with flying colors. And to be perfectly honest,” he said with a wry expression, “you weren’t the only one to fall sleep in my classes. I soon realized that my skill set did not include teaching. It was why I gave up my position at the Academy and returned to my first love – research.

“And you appear to have done very well for yourself, Captain,” he continued. “A lieutenant commander and In command of your own starship, I see!”

“You are most gracious, Doctor Shoolen,” Landy replied. “I’ve been fortunate in my career to have good role models.”

“We both know that for the most part, luck is comprised of hard work and good judgment,” he answered.

“True words, Doctor.” Landy turned to address them both.

“What kind of research do you do on the *Walther Raleigh*?

Where is your primary research station? I got the impression that you were heading back to Earth when you had your problems.”

“We have been developing a new method of refining dilithium that makes the engines 20% more efficient. Theoretically, it could increase the maximum warp capability of any vessel. Our research facility is on Ponea III, a few light-years away from here,” answered Westfield.

“Sounds interesting, Doctor!” Landy exclaimed.

“It is quite exciting,” he smiled. “We had successfully completed many simulations before undertaking a field test in the *Walther Raleigh*. We had made some short warp jumps intrasystem around Ponea before feeling confident to try it on a longer voyage. We were achieving some fifteen percent higher warp speed than the engines are rated for before the warp core overheated and knocked out half of our systems.”

“I’m impressed,” the young captain said. “So it worked?”

Shoolen nodded. “Yes, it seemed to be working exactly as predicted by our models,” he said. “Sadly, this is where it became obvious that we are old warp theorists and not so proficient at practice.”

The *Montgomery*'s chief engineer stepped forward.

"Fortunately, practice is something we get a fair bit of keeping old ships flying," Lieutenant D'lar replied with a disconcertingly wide smile on his flexible Denobulan face.

"Mr. D'Lar, I will leave you and Dr. Shoolen with your engineering team to try to repair the damage to the ship. Dr. Westfield," Landy said, "The rest of your crew may beam across now if you are ready to." She touched her brow, where sweat was beading already. "It's a lot more comfortable on the *Montgomery* and there is a hot shower waiting for you. I would be honored if you would all join me for dinner, at say, 1900 hours?"

"That sounds wonderful, Captain," Westfield answered. "You are most kind. We shall join you then."

## Chapter 3

The five scientists, now clean and in fresh clothes, sat with Captain Landy and her first officer, Lieutenant Jones, in the Captain's mess, the remains of their meals in front of them.

"Thank you, Captain," Dr. T'Sor said as she dabbed at her mouth with a napkin. "That was most satisfying."

"And a lot better than we've been having on the *Raleigh*," grumbled Haenfir. Tellarites were renowned for their capacity to complain about everything. It was a cultural behavior of their species, which most other species found difficult to adjust to.

"Our protein resequencers are outdated even compared to the Montgomery's," Dr. Gasna replied smoothly. The Lorillian was obviously used to dealing with the Tellarite's outbursts. "Not that we have much better at the laboratory on Ponea."

"You don't seem very well funded for your research, Doctors," said Jones. "If your research is as valuable as it seems, I'm surprised you don't have more resources available to you."

"Sadly, progress has been slow," answered Shoolen. "It's taken us four years and a lot of setbacks to get to here. It's why we were so keen to show the success with the flight back to Earth using the new dilithium."

"Makes sense," Landy said. "Speaking of your dilithium refinement equipment, I'm assuming that is still on Ponea?"

“Yes,” Westfield said. “Some of the steps in the process are quite dangerous, and it was best to take it to an isolated location such as Ponea. We are still working on how to improve the safety of the entire process so that it can be mass-produced for the Federation’s fleet.”

“Assuming,” T’Sor interjected, “the refined dilithium remains stable once refined.” She cocked her eyebrow. “I have my suspicions that this is the cause of the failure of the *Walther Raleigh’s* warp core.”

“Nonsense,” Shoolen scoffed. “It’s an old ship and the old components simply failed.”

T’Sor shook her head. “We need to consider the possibility that there is a fundamental flaw in the dilithium. It is only logical to allow for that to be the case.”

“Have you left any of your research team on Ponea with your equipment?” asked Landy.

“No,” answered Westfield. “We all worked together on this project and felt it best that we all be present to defend its utility to the academic community.”

“So your facility is currently unattended?” Jones asked, surprised.

“Yes, Lieutenant,” replied T’Sor. “We do have proximity sensors with remote monitors and security measures set up in case someone visits, but it’s so remote and only a handful of

people even know about our research, it's highly unlikely that anyone will attempt to gain access."

"Hmm," Landy said. She stood up and clicked the communicator on the wall beside her. "Ensign Rajwani, please patch me through to Lieutenant D'lar on the *Raleigh*."

"Yes, Captain," the young communications officer replied. A moment later, D'lar's voice came over the comm.

"D'lar here," he responded.

"Lieutenant, can you give me an estimate to how long it will take to complete repairs to the *Raleigh*?"

"It's going to be a while, Captain. There's quite a bit of damage to the coolant lines. We got life support back up and running enough to keep things comfortable over here, but we're having to refit a bunch of components."

"Any idea as to what caused the warp core to fail?"

"Negative, Captain, still working through what needs repairing before we can try to re-initialize the warp matrix."

"Best guess, Lieutenant."

"24 hours, maybe a little more."

"Keep at it, Mr. D'lar."

"Aye, Captain."

Landy then signaled her navigation officer. “Mr. Burton, how long would it take to reach Ponea III at Warp 5?”

A pause, before the young ensign responded. “Eight hours, Captain.”

“Thank you, Ensign.” Landy shut off the communicator and turned to her guests. “Since your trip is at least a day longer than expected, we can head over to your research facility and pick up your dilithium processing plant, if it will fit in one of the cargo bays.”

Shoolen nodded. “The unit is not so large, but it was too big for our cargo holds. It should fit in yours. He looked at the young starship captain with a concerned expression. “Are you sure, Captain? You’re going quite out of your way for us.”

Landy smiled. “We have to wait for our engineering team to finish fixing your warp drive, so rather than sit about, we can be doing something productive. We were heading back to Earth Spacedock anyway, so we are all going the same direction. We can beam it down to your lab on Earth once we arrive. Besides,” she said as she stood up, “If your invention is as impressive as you believe, then it is in Starfleet’s best interests to expedite its use for our starships.”

The visitors also stood up and Dr. Westfield replied, “Thank you, Captain. It’s a great service you are doing for us and for the Federation. We already have everything here that we need, so we can leave whenever you and your crew are ready.”

“Now is as good a time as any,” Landy said.



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Eight hours later, the *Montgomery* dropped out of orbit and navigated into a geostationary orbit over the research installation on Ponea III. The pinkish sphere below was a Class L planet, with no animal life. The research station consisted of a pair of connected habitat domes, one for living spaces and the other for laboratory spaces.

A few minutes later, Captain Landy, Lieutenant Sinead Parker, the second-in-command engineer behind D'lar, and the five researchers materialized in the middle of the laboratory dome inside the research station. They looked around the room as Dr. Gasna gasped in shock.

Someone had been there, and they had torn the laboratory apart. Desks were overturned, datapads strewn over the floor and computer terminals smashed. Both Starfleet officers immediately drew their phasers.

"I'm assuming it didn't look like this when you left, Doctors," Landy said wryly.

"It most certainly did not, Captain," answered Dr. T'Sor. "It appears that we have had an uninvited guest in our absence."

"More than one, I would say," the young captain replied. "They haven't left much here of use."

“The processing plant!” yelled Shoolen. The Andorian ran from the main lab into an adjoining room. A moment later, he returned with a beaten expression on his blue face. “It’s gone,” he said simply. “The whole thing. And they’ve destroyed the main computer. Fortunately, we have all of our notes and documentation that we took with us to Earth, but unless we can find everything that has been taken, it will set us back years.”

“Let’s try to avoid that outcome, Doctor,” Landy said. She took her communicator from her belt and hailed the *Montgomery*. “Mr. Jones, please go to yellow alert. Someone has been here in our absence and I would rather they not catch us unawares.”

“Aye Captain,” responded the ship’s first officer without hesitation. “Raise shields, Mr. Burton.” He then addressed the captain again. “What happened, ma’am?”

“Whoever has been here has taken the dilithium processing plant and done considerable damage to the research facility. No doubt they have gone to warp by now, but can you trace any impulse or warp signatures in the system?”

“Scanning now, Captain.” A pause. “Yes, we can detect an outgoing warp trail approximately eleven hours old.”

“Can you match it to any known signatures, Commander?” asked Landy her first officer.

“Yes, Captain. And you’re not going to like it,” Jones answered.

“Give it to me straight, Mr. Jones,” she replied.

“It’s Romulan. And it’s heading straight for the Neutral Zone.”



## Chapter 4

Ten minutes later, the *Montgomery* was back at warp, following the path left by the thieving Romulan vessel. The scientists, with the exception of Dr. Westfield, and a significant security detail had been left behind at the research facility to try to rescue any information that hadn't been damaged or destroyed. It was a race now; if the Romulan ship made it to the Neutral Zone, it was gone forever.

The Romulan ship had been identified as a D7 class cruiser; like the *Montgomery*, it was old but still a formidable vessel. With some upgrades over the past decade, the Constitution refit had the edge in top speed. Landy had calculated that at maximum warp, they could catch it just inside the neutral zone. Assuming they hadn't changed course. And hadn't been likewise upgraded.

They had to try.

Captain Landy sat behind her desk in her ready room speaking with Dr. Westfield, seated opposite her.

"Did you find out how the Romulans managed to get into your lab without setting off your alarm, Doctor?" she asked.

"I'm afraid so, Captain," he replied. "It seems that the Romulan ship had been cloaked in orbit around Ponea III when we left. We sent the activation codes to the security system as we left, which they must have intercepted. From there, they simply set the deactivation codes and were able to gain access to the

research facility unimpeded.” Westfield sighed. “To add insult to injury, they then reactivated it as they left, so we wouldn’t be alerted when we returned to the system.”

“Probably to not warn any more heavily armed vessels you may have returned with,” Landy surmised. “It no doubt gave them a little extra time to escape with your research.”

“Yes. If they get it back into Romulan space, then the Empire will have the advantage over the Federation ships that we wished to give to Starfleet.”

“In other words, we need to catch them,” the captain replied. “I have sent a subspace transmission to Starfleet headquarters, but no other ships are in the vicinity that can get there any faster than we can. It looks like we’re it.”

“I have confidence in your ship and your crew’s ability, Captain,” said Westfield. “There’s little more we can do. If the Romulans do escape, then we will need to beg for the resources of the Federation to allow us to rebuild what we have lost as quickly as we can.”

“If it comes to it, I’m sure that will happen, Doctor,” Landy said. “I’m not ready to give up just yet. I would have preferred to have my chief engineer on board, but Lieutenant Parker is very capable. She’s giving us 105 percent efficiency from our engines.”

“It is a shame that we don’t have our refined dilithium, Captain. We could have gained a significant boost in warp capability.”

“Let’s hope that the Romulans didn’t have the same idea and applied it to their own engines. If they have, then we have no chance of catching them.”

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Landy sat in the captain’s chair on the bridge. They had been traveling at maximum warp for six hours, chasing down the Romulan ship.

“How far to the Neutral Zone, Ensign?” she asked of her navigation officer.

“Less than three hours at our current speed, Captain,” answered Burton.

“And how long before we intercept the Romulan ship?”

“One hour, fifty-three minutes, ma’am.”

“So it’s going to be close.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

She flicked the communicator switch on the arm of her chair.

“Bridge to Engineering. Can we squeeze any more from the engines, Mr. Parker?”

“No Captain,” the Irish engineer replied. “The warp core is already on the verge of overheating. It’s taking everything we have to stop popping circuit breakers.”

“Best speed, Lieutenant. Keep her from falling apart on us.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Landy switched the communicator back off. Her first officer, Lieutenant Commander Jones said, “We’ll catch them, Captain. It will be tight, but we’ll catch them.”

“Yes, but then we have to stop them,” she answered. “The D7 is a formidable ship.”

“So’s the *Montgomery*,” Jones replied wryly.

“That she is, Mr. Jones. The problem is that we need to disable her without damaging her prize.”

“If we can’t, we’re better off destroying her and the dilithium processing plant than letting her escape with it.”

“Which would inflame tensions even further,” Landy sighed. “Let’s catch them first and see what happens from there.”

Ensign Rajwani, the communications officer spoke up. “Captain, we are receiving a distress signal on our course.” A bemused expression crossed her face. “It’s Romulan.”

“Romulan?” the captain repeated, surprised. “Are we close enough to see if the warp signature matches that of the vessel who stole the dilithium processing plant?”

“Hard to say, Captain,” answered Jones. The first officer lifted his face from his science station, a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. “It seems that they have had a warp drive malfunction. They had to eject their warp core before it took the ship with it.”

“Two ships with warp drive malfunctions in the space of one day is too much of a coincidence for my taste,” said Landy. “Set course to intercept. Once we arrive, raise shields and go to red alert.”

“Yes, Captain,” Jones replied.



## Chapter 5

The *Montgomery* flashed out of warp close to the stricken Warbird. Its main power was clearly out as the Romulan ship slowly drifted in space, faint emergency lighting was visible through its windows.

“Hail them,” Landy said to Ensign Rajwani.

“Yes, ma’am,” replied the communications officer. Her hands moved across her console before she said in a clear voice, “Romulan vessel, this is the Federation Starship *USS Montgomery*, answering your distress beacon. How may we assist?”

A moment later, she looked at Landy and said, “They’re responding, Captain.”

“On screen,” she commanded. “And shields down, Mr. Burton. There is no danger here now.”

The external view of the Romulan ship on the main viewscreen was replaced with the face of a Romulan sub-commander on the bridge. Smoke could be seen all around her that the ship’s life support on emergency power was unable to filter out. The lights were dimmed and sparks erupted from one of the terminals behind her.

“Captain, I’m Captain Arienne Landy. It seems as though you are having a rather bad day.”

The expression on the Romulan's face was a look of daggers. "You did this! The Federation deliberately set this trap for us and disabled our ship!"

Landy smiled. "I have no idea what you are talking about, Captain. Although you currently seemed to be stranded in Federation space on the wrong side of the Neutral Zone, and have something in your cargo hold that doesn't belong to you."

She turned to her first officer. "Mr. Jones, do you have a lock on the dilithium processing equipment?"

Jones looked up, "Yes, Captain. The Romulans' shields are down, we have transported it into Cargo Bay 1."

The Romulan Captain sputtered, "You have no right to take that!"

"Do you mean take what you stole from Ponea III, Captain? I think you will find we have every right. And I would appreciate your handing back everything else that you stole."

"And what if we refuse?"

"I don't think you're in much of a position to refuse anything right now, Captain. You have no warp drive, you are running on emergency power and clearly, your life support is compromised. You also happen to be in direct contravention of the treaty between the Federation and the Romulan Empire. You can give them to us now, or we can just wait until you run out of life support, and we'll come and get them anyway when you and your crew are all dead."

“Are you threatening us, Captain?”

Landy held up her hands, “No threats. Just giving you the options available to you. Your call.”

The sub-commander grimaced. “It doesn’t look like we have much of a choice now, does it? All right, we’ll do as you ask.” She turned and spoke to someone behind her in Romulan. “Give them what they want.” She turned back to the screen. “Now what, Captain?”

“Well,” she smiled, “it seems that a Romulan vessel had some navigational issues and somehow managed to stray into Federation space. Their ship was old and suffered a warp drive malfunction. Fortunately, we were close by and were able to render assistance and tow them back to the Neutral Zone. Does that sound about right to you, Captain?”

“Apparently so, Captain Landy,” the Romulan answered. “But why pursue such a deception when both our governments know better?”

“Because right now, we have an uneasy peace between the Federation and the Romulan Empire. People aren’t dying in open combat on a daily basis. That peace is important, and I want to keep it.”

Arienne Landy’s expression turned firm. “Alternatively, we could just blow you out space for invading Federation space and stealing from a civilian research facility, which will result in war between our two peoples, in which you will be the first casualty.

I don't know about you, but I don't really think that is going to help anybody, do you?"

The Romulan captain's face softened, "We were always taught that the Federation was weak, that their captains don't have the stomach to hold to their convictions. It seems that this isn't necessarily the case." She sighed. "It seems we have much to learn." She drew herself straighter, "Now if you don't mind, Captain, we seem to be running out of life support, will you help us get out of here?"

## Chapter 6

The *Montgomery* was twelve hours away from Earth Spacedock, Captain Arienne Landy sat in her ready room. In her hand was a small microphone as she dictated her log.

“Captain’s Log, Stardate 16317.8. We repaired life support on the Romulan vessel and towed it to the edge of the Neutral Zone, from where they sent a distress signal to the Romulus. We waited for another Romulan ship to arrive, who then towed it back home and stayed until they cleared the Neutral Zone.

“Captain Tinol, as I found out was the name of the Romulan sub-commander in command of the Romulan warbird, was very cooperative after we spoke. Not that she had much choice, but at least she was gracious about it, and I tried to make sure I didn’t rub her nose in it. I believe she will tell the same official tale as we have. She gave us full access to their data and we ensured that all traces of the stolen research had been deleted.

“We returned the dilithium refinement processing plant to Ponea III and collected the rest of the research team, then rendezvoused with the *Walther Raleigh*. Lieutenant D’lar had just completed repairs, and we transported Dr. Westfield and the research team to the *Raleigh*. They are now en route to Ponea III and their research facility. They have postponed their trip to Earth indefinitely.

“Sadly, their research appears to be fundamentally flawed, and while functional in small laboratory experiments and short intra-

system hops, the refined dilithium becomes unstable once the mass exceeds a specific threshold. This threshold is far below that required to power even a shuttlecraft, and there seems to be no immediate solution to their problem.

“Of course, in the face of what has happened, my superiors are fully aware of the real story, as I am certain is the Romulan Star Empire. I will need to debrief with Starfleet command once we arrive back in Spacedock, but it is my belief that everyone will let the matter drop.

“The bigger concern is that the Romulans are making these incursions into Federation space. We may need to more actively patrol the border of the Neutral Zone over the course of the next few years. At least until we can try to establish a greater level of trust between our peoples, but that is a matter for governments, not lowly starship captains.

“My crew is looking forward to some time off, and the *Montgomery* will get some repairs to our systems. I have been advised in the wake of this incident that there is no immediate desire to decommission any of our ships, so the *Montgomery* will remain active for the foreseeable future.”

Landy put down her microphone, her log completed. It had been an interesting few days, and she was proud of how her crew had responded under the pressure of the situation. They had avoided a direct confrontation, and the *Montgomery* was able to return home safely with no casualties.

She was yet to receive her orders for her next mission; they had seven days' shore leave on Earth, and she knew that many of her

crew were looking forward to spending time with loved ones. At first, she envied them; she was committed to her job and left little time for a social life or relationships. But she was happy with where she was. She loved what she did and wouldn't trade that for anything.

Sighing, she stood up, straightened her uniform and returned to the bridge. For Arienne Landy, that was her home.

# 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>

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