

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black cowboy hat, a yellow scarf, a black leather jacket, a yellow vest, and black leather pants and boots, stands next to a dark brown horse. They are in a dusty western town street. In the background, there are wooden buildings, one with a sign that says "SALOON" and another with "GENERAL STORE". Other people in period clothing are visible in the distance. The sky is a mix of purple and blue, suggesting dusk or dawn.

STAR TREK: THE LEXINGTON ADVENTURES

HEAVY ON THE DRAW

An Original Short Story
by Lexington creator
Joey Bonice

“Heavy on the Draw”

**Story by
Joey Bonice**

**Star Trek: The *Lexington* Adventures based on Star Trek[®] created by
Gene Roddenberry**

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Commander Brianna Smith and Lieutenant Kimberly Bautista were in the officer's lounge on the Federation starship *Lexington*, relaxing by watching a movie that Brianna had picked out. The film was one of her favorites, which revolved around a heavily fortified, steel plated stagecoach and the mismatched crew planning to rob the gold that was on it.

They had come to the scene where two of the main characters were involved in a shootout.

"Mine hit the ground first," said one of them.

"Mine was taller," said the taller one.

Kimberly barely swallowed her mouthful of popcorn. "That's complete bull--!"

"Computer, pause the film." Brianna looked to the Filipina officer quizzically.

"Kimmy, what the devil are you talking about?"

Kimberly grabbed a glass off the table in front of her and took a swallow of water before she spoke. "Looking at this from a tactical perspective..."

"Oh Lord," sighed Brianna.

"...there should be no way that the two main characters knew that the other two would draw on them. Added to that, these men, who are acting like messengers instead of killers, would have the advantage as they didn't decide to shoot until a few moments before they turned and drew their guns."

"And have the movie end before it really gets going?" countered Brianna. "Of course, they knew these two bozos would try something like that and filled them full of lead before they got the chance!"

"Do you know just fast you'd have to be to do that, Brie?" Kimberly shook her head. "I've not seen anyone with that kind of speed."

"Oh come on, Kimmie!" said Brianna. "That's easy!"

"Actors make everything look easy when they really aren't!" Kimberly sighed and stared at the viewscreen, looking at the guns being used. "I don't know what kind of gun they are using but they look like they are heavier than our phasers. As a trained tactical officer, it takes me about two seconds to draw my phaser, aim, and fire. A true professional, such as these two characters are purported to be, should take anywhere between one to one and a half seconds. According to the film, they didn't even have that."

"And again, that would be the end of the film if they got killed *before* they could steal that wagon. I believe it is called '*plot armor*'."

"I'd like to see *you* do any better," Kimberly challenged.

Brianna was too experienced to allow a challenge like that to get under her skin. "Kimberly, do you want to continue to argue with me about the merits of being a gunfighter some more or would you like to see how the movie turns out?"

Kimberly blushed a little. "Sorry. Inaccuracies like that always gets under my skin." She settled back in her seat and looked at her popcorn bowl in her lap. "Looks like I could use a little more popcorn."

"Computer, resume film," Brianna ordered. But Kimberly did bring up one good point... it looked easy on the big screen but how would work under live conditions? Hell, could she do what she just said looked easy?

There was only one way to find out.

Brieanna was riding dark brown horse, riding into a stereotypical, non-descript Old West town with no name. She had dressed like one of the characters from the movie she had just watched: a black leather shirt, black riding pants, dark yellow suede vest, a bright yellow bandana, black leather gloves, and a dark 10-gallon hat covering her dark, graying, hair. She also had a Colt Single Action Army pistol in a holster on her right hip.

She surveyed the town as they rode in, suspecting everything and nothing at the same time. Her eyes glanced about, looking for the unexpected. Before long, she found who she was looking for. The man she had her eyes on bore just a passing resemblance to another gunfighter she also admired but from another film. This man was bald with piercing eyes and dressed all in black. He had a similar gun to Brieanna's but his was silver whereas hers was a gunmetal blue.

Brieanna dismounted and led her horse to a hitching post, keeping a wary eye on her target. She flipped the holster's little leather strap off the hammer, allowing her to draw her weapon without hinderance.

After she had hitched the horse, Brieanna started to walk over to the person she was looking for. His eyes found her at the same time she found him.

He started towards her and she to him.

They met somewhere in the middle with about 30 feet between them.

It hadn't escaped her notice that his right hand hadn't strayed far from his gun, as if he was expecting trouble.

"Looking for someone?" he asked with a deep, western Russian tinged accented voice.

"I may be," Brieanna answered gruffly. "Or I may not."

"I think you are. And I think you are looking for me."

"And what if I am?" She very slowly brought her hand towards her gun.

"Then you're either very brave. Or very foolish."

"Let's just see which one is true." The streets emptied quickly, lest any innocent bystander be caught in the line of fire. Brieanna stopped her gloved hand to just above her gun. She was watching him intently, looking for signs that he was going to draw. She knew better than to look at the eyes... Starfleet Academy and decades fighting Klingons had taught her better. Instead, she looked at his shoulders. If he were to draw, the moment he made that decision, his shoulders would tense up before he went for his sidearm.

Even looking as intently as she was, Brieanna still somehow missed her cue. He went for his gun before she realized it. A single shot and she found herself hit in the torso. More precisely, he had hit her heart. It was only then that she realized that she only had her gun out about halfway from its holster before she received her fatal shot.

"Computer, pause," she called into thin air. Everyone and everything froze in that moment. Luckily, she had engaged the safety protocols before starting the simulation so she was never in any real danger. She was safely in her quarters on the *Lexington*. Every senior officers stateroom had an alcove that could be customized and Brieanna decided to install in a virtual reality simulator. Even with that, she still needed to wear special VR glasses, which had built in headphones for privacy, so she could see everything clearly.

Goddamn, she thought. *Where the hell did that come from? I was looking right at him and he still got a shot off before I could react!*

“Computer, what the hell was that?”

The response was a few moments in coming. “The simulation is within specified parameters.”

“The hell it is,” she retorted. “Just how fast was his draw?”

“One point zero one seconds.”

“Computer, there’s no way a human being could be *that* fast on the draw. What would have been my time?”

“Based on observed performance, estimated total time for Commander Smith would have been two point one seconds.”

A full second’s difference, she thought. Man, he was just as fast as a snake and just as deadly! And I never saw him draw until he fired.

She sighed angrily at herself, knowing she had been soundly beaten. But she wasn’t one to just give up that easy. Her pride wouldn’t let her rest until she beat this guy, even if he were a simulation.

“Computer,” she ordered, “reset the simulation. We’re going to try again.”

Fourteen days later and Brianna was still nowhere near beating the virtual gunfighter. And for a self-professed cowgirl from North Dakota, that was hard on both her ego and her pride. Every day when she got off duty, she took just enough time to eat, change into the same outfit since it was now broken in and comfortable, then go into the simulator until it was time to go to bed. She was easily putting in 4-5 hours a night, every night and she had been doing it for two weeks straight.

There was one bright side to all this practice and that was her reaction time had dropped to one point four seconds. What was wounding her pride was that his time remained at that impossible one point zero one second. She knew it was a computer but the computer was basing its data from the film the gunfighter was based on and it had calculated his speed and time. And that hurt her pride even more.

But her newfound speed had come with a hefty price tag. She had pulled that gun so much that her right shoulder and elbow kept bothering her. She’d already gone to sickbay twice since she thought she was getting pulled muscles. Luckily, she had avoided the main medical staff so she didn’t have to explain herself. It also helped that she was the executive officer so to a nurse, she didn’t have to say any more than needed.

But during the last draw, there was a very sharp pain in her shoulder that actually caused her to drop the gun in mid-draw. Now that was troublesome. This sharp pain meant something really wasn’t right. So, she put her holster and gun on a nearby dresser and walked to sickbay. She was confident that she could once again avoid the doctors and would not to have to provide an embarrassing explanation.

When she entered sickbay, she saw only one other patient but her hopes were dashed for a quick explanation and getaway when she saw Doctor Dawn Mathias, the *Lexington’s* chief medical officer, working on him. Brianna knew that if Dawn knew she was there, she’d be next to be examined and Dawn would want a reason, not a lie. Her only saving grace was that Dawn wasn’t looking at the door so Brianna tried to back out quietly before Dawn saw her. And that was exactly then when Dawn turned to look at the sound of

the opening doors and saw the girl in black standing there with a slightly flabbergasted look.

“Take a seat, Brie,” Dawn said, ending any hopes of a getaway. “I’ll be with you in a few minutes.” To her patient, she said with her Australian accent, “Just work that knee twice a day and the stiffness will be gone before you know it.” She helped the chief to his feet. “And stay out of the racquetball court for a week. Got me, Chief?”

“I hear you, Doctor. Thanks for the help!”

“That’s what they pay me for, but thanks all the same. Off you go.”

The chief slowly walked out of sickbay and that’s when Dawn gave Brianna, who hadn’t moved from the door, a close look. To Dawn’s trained eye, Brianna was favoring her right arm and given she was in a cowgirl outfit, it stood to reason that she’d been doing something that cowgirls do and somehow hurt her arm. Dawn thought, *But how she would have done that on a Federation starship? That would take some doing!*

“I was hoping to go off duty and cook myself something, Brie,” Dawn said, “but it looks like there’s one more patient before I get dinner tonight.” Dawn shrugged her shoulders. “Such is the life of a doctor.”

Brianna looked to the deck as she answered. “It’s nothing. Maybe I...”

Dawn cut off that line of thought. “The second you crossed that threshold, you became a patient.” Dawn crossed her arms like a mother scolding her young. “And don’t think I haven’t noticed you favoring your right arm.”

Brianna started to protest. “Dawn, there’s nothing...”

Dawn shot her a disapproving look. “I hate to say this since I like to think this is the most hospitable sickbay in the fleet but people like you only visit when there’s something wrong with you and it’s usually bad.” She patted the biobed. “Come and sit on the bed and I’ll take a look.”

“It’s nothing, really...” Brianna weakly protested.

Now Dawn’s patience was starting to come to its limit. “When you’re in here, Brie, *I’m* the boss. And right now, I want you to sit on the bed.”

Brianna knew an order when she heard one. She also knew that Dawn was correct... once someone became a doctor’s patient, the doctor was the boss until they released them from treatment. So the Dakota native hopped up on the bed, though she was careful in using her right arm too much. It also took a lot of effort not to grimace when the pain stabbed her arm.

For her part, Dawn produced a medical tricorder and began to run her scan on the cowgirl commander’s body. She looked at the tricorder’s readout while running the scanner in her other hand, deliberately staying silent. But if she thought her silence was going to work on Brianna, she thought wrong. Brianna also kept silent as the Australian performed her exam.

Dawn was the first to break the silence. “I’m almost afraid to ask this but how did you hurt your shoulder?”

Brianna really didn’t want to tell anyone what she was doing. Her pride could only take so much abuse. “I really don’t want to say. Can I plead the Fifth Amendment?”

The scanner didn’t stop but concentrated on her right shoulder. “You can but then I’d keep you in here overnight.”

Brieanna thought about this for a few moments. Legally, Dawn would be well within her rights as the chief medical officer to keep her in sickbay, even over something this trivial. And there would be no way for Brieanna to dispute it unless she wanted to file malpractice charges. Over something trivial like this, it would not be worth it and she liked Dawn, both as a doctor and as a friend.

“You’d keep me in here *overnight* just so I would tell you how I hurt my arm?”

“I’d prefer if you’d just tell me so I can accurately diagnose your arm,” countered Dawn. “Seeing that it’s only your right one and that you’ve been in here twice before for pains and muscle strains to your right arm, elbow, and wrist, you’re doing something and you keep doing it. And whatever that is... well, it’s really aggravating it.”

Brieanna looked at the ceiling, clearly embarrassed. Dawn kept looking between Brieanna, the scanner, and her tricorder readings. *So what is it that she’s not telling me?* thought Dawn.

“What’s going on, Brie?”

Even with no one else around, Brieanna was still uncomfortable in telling why she was there. “I... I uh... I...”

“Brie, just come out with it.”

Brieanna sighed in resignation. Very softly, she said, “I’ve been practicing my draw.”

Dawn stopped her examination and looked Brieanna in the eye. “What did you say? You’ve been practicing draw...*ing*? You working with oil, acrylic, or watercolor?”

“Not *that* kind of draw.”

“I know. I was trying to make a joke.”

“That was a *joke*? You’re kidding!”

Dawn just looked at the executive officer, confused and her look said it all.

“I mean I was practicing drawing a gun from a holster I was wearing.”

Now Dawn was confused. “A *gun*? You mean a *phaser*, right?”

“No, I mean a real, old-fashioned revolver. A Colt Single Action.”

“I’m a doctor, not a gun expert. What is that?”

“It was a popular gun used in the Old West. The only other gun that was more popular was the Colt Peacemaker. The Colt I’m using is a .45 caliber and it weighs about one point one kilos. It’s 279 millimeters long...”

Dawn shook her head, still confused. “As I said,” she interrupted before she knew more about a gun than she cared to know, “I’m not a gun expert. But what has all these gun specs have to do with...” Comprehension started to set in. “I see. I think.”

“No, you really don’t.” She finally turned her head to look the doctor right in the eye. “I’ve been practicing drawing this gun from a holster, like you’d see in an old Western film. And I’m practicing against one of the fictional Old West’s best gunfighters. He is fast, I mean *super fast*! His draw time is one point one seconds. My best time has been one point four...”

Dawn interrupted again. “Can you tell it to me in English, please?”

“He’s outdrawing me,” Brieanna said defeatedly. “Even after two weeks, I don’t think I’m getting any better.”

Now Dawn comprehended but for Brieanna’s sake, she still acted like she didn’t. “Still haven’t told me where you’re doing this.”

“In the VR suite in my quarters. And before you ask, my gun is unloaded before I get in the suite and it stays unloaded.”

“Now it all makes sense,” said Dawn, putting away the scanner and tricorder, then looked to her friend. “Brie, what you’ve done is sprained your shoulder and elbow. Every time you’re drawing, it’s aggravating the injury. The previous treatments weren’t effective, because the reason you gave at the time was an overworked shoulder so that’s what my nurses treated.” She walked over to a nearby table and loaded a hypospray.

“What you doing to do, Dawn?”

“Three centuries ago, they’d have told you to ice your shoulder, give you some muscle relaxers and pain medication, then told you to go on light duty for a week.” She turned around and carefully held the hypo as she walked over to the bed. “Lucky for you, this is the 23rd Century. What I’m going to give you is better than all of that combined but you won’t be able to practice until tomorrow.”

That caused Brianna to look at her in alarm. “Hey, now wait a *second*...!”

Dawn put her fists on the edge of the bed, her right hand still holding the hypo. “It’s either this or I put you on light duty for a week, I tell Alex his XO is out of action, and you are forced to pause your extracurricular program that entire time. And I don’t think he would like it very much that you’re on the sideline. Now, it’s up to you what I do.”

Brianna thought about her choices. She really didn’t want to tell anyone what she was up to and having to explain to the *captain* what she had told the doctor... she didn’t want to even contemplate it. It was already embarrassing enough to tell the doctor and she could only imagine what Alex would say if he found out. And she was rather enjoying her program so pausing it for a week was almost out of the question.

“Go ahead and give me the shot, Doc,” she said deflated.

“That’s a good XO,” Dawn said, administering the shot quickly and professionally in her shoulder, right through Brianna’s shirt. Brianna didn’t feel a thing but she did notice that the pain in her arm was instantly starting to lessen.

“That should do the trick. Remember... no practice for a full day. As much as I like you, Brie, I don’t want to see you in here again for quite a while. Understood?”

The slight joke made Brianna slightly smile. “I hear you, Doc.”

“And one other thing. Remember to use earplugs when you’re practicing your shooting. I noticed a point one percent decrease in your hearing when I examined you.”

“But I’m not using any ammunition, Dawn! I’m dry firing!”

Dawn put the hypo and tricorder on the tray, then looked at Brianna. “But your VR program is still simulating the sounds of gunfire and that kind of noise will cause you to have ringing in your ears, then you lose your hearing. And in this day and age, you shouldn’t have tinnitus or be deaf. Our phasers are a lot less noisy than a gun.”

“Well, if I can’t hear him draw, it won’t do me any good,” objected Brianna. “I have to be able to hear him draw.”

“Next thing you’ll be telling me is that all this is part of the experience of Old West gunfighting.”

Brianna gave her a charming smile. “Don’t knock it until you try it.”

“I’m from Bunbury. It’s a coastal town in Australia. Old West type of gunfights went out of style there about three hundred years ago.” A thought hit Dawn. “Are you using the built in headset?”

“Yes.”

The doctor nodded. “That’ll do it. Turn the volume down and set the volume limiter to about 90 decibels. You’ll still hear everything just fine and it’ll help protect your hearing. How’s the arm feeling?”

Brianna rotated her arm and it felt normal again. There was no sharp pain so whatever Dawn had given her had done its job. “It’s feeling much better now.”

“Good. One other thing…”

Brianna was starting to get impatient. She slid off the bed and stood up as Dawn tidied up her tray. “*Another* thing? Come on, Dawn!”

“I was going to recommend using a lighter weight gun but since you’re not interested…”

“I thought you weren’t a gun expert.”

Dawn turned to face her. “I’m not but it’s obvious that what caused your sprain was overloading your arm. Now there are exercises you can do to help prevent sprains and I recommend you do them until you can properly handle your… what did you call it? A Colt Peacemaker?”

“It’s a Colt Single Action Army. I could use the shorter barrel, which would lose some weight while still retaining the same caliber…”

“You get my point. I’ll e-mail you the exercises for your arm.”

“Understood, Dawn. Anything else?”

“Other than you keeping me from my home cooked steak dinner, no.” Dawn was an avid cook and the entire crew knew it. “I’m all done with you. If the pain comes back, don’t hesitate to come in and have me paged.”

Brianna gave her a puzzled look. “Why have you paged?”

Dawn gave her an ‘are you kidding me’ look. “Unless you want to go over your story again with one of my nurses or Doctor Furillo…”

Brianna chuckled for the first time in days. *I really like Dawn*, she thought. *With her, there’s no bullshit but she’s also willing to look the other way just to protect your feelings. A fine doctor.* “I get your point. I’ll have you paged.”

The next day while Brianna was doing the exercises that Dawn had prescribed her, she was thinking about something the doctor had said about her gun. Since Brianna was a little girl, she’d been using a Colt Single Action. Out on her family’s ranch in North Dakota, you still needed protection and her father didn’t like phasers so he made all his kids use old-fashioned firearms since they were easier to own than legally obtaining a civilian phaser permit.

But Dawn had made a point. Until Brianna entered Starfleet Academy, she used the shorter 260-millimeter barrel but kept the .45 caliber ammo. When she entered the Academy, she switched to the longer 279-millimeter barrel, knowing the longer the barrel would give her more accuracy.

When she first started her Academy phaser training, the phaser flew out of her hands since a phaser weighed a lot less and Brianna wasn't used to it. The second time, the phaser slipped from her hands, hit the ground, and accidentally went off while it was pointed at Brianna. She woke up fifteen minutes later with a very scared and irate instructor standing over her and whose yelling didn't make her headache any better.

Brianna didn't make that mistake ever again. At the very next range session, she handled her phaser as if she had been born with it. But she never lost her touch with her trusty firearms from the past. Ever since she graduated from the Academy, she practiced with the long barrel firearm whenever the chance presented itself. But would her childhood sense memory come back if she switched back to the shorter barrel? After all, it was a 19-millimeter difference but could that a lousy 19 millimeters could make *that* much of a difference?

"Computer," she said, still working on her arm exercises, "I've been using the 279-millimeter barrel and I've not gone under one point four seconds when I'm drawing, correct?"

"Correct," came the instant reply.

"What if I were to switch to a 260-millimeter barrel but keep the same caliber ammunition?"

"Insufficient data to perform an accurate analysis."

Brianna huffed. "Well, *extrapolate* then. Based on past performance, what would be my time if I had the shorter barrel?"

It took the computer an eternity to answer... a full seven seconds.

"Based on past performance data, it would be reasonable to assume that your draw time would be approximately one point two seconds."

Brianna thought about that for a moment. "So, if I were to switch to the shorter barrel, there would be a chance I could beat him?"

Again, there was a pause while the computer went through its routines.

"Affirmative," came the answer.

Now I've got you, you bastard, she thought. *Not only is the barrel shorter, I lose a little weight and that should bring me to that magic goal of one point one seconds.*

Lucky for her that she brought both guns with her when she reported aboard the *Lexington*. She completed her exercises before she walked over to the dresser that held her firearms. In the bottom drawer was two cases, one red and one blue. The red one held the longer barreled gun. She pulled out the blue case, placed it on top of the dresser and opened it.

There was the gunmetal blue Colt Single Action that had been the center of her thoughts. She gently picked it up and looked it over. She cleaned both firearms once a month, whether they needed it or not. And the gun she held looked pristine.

"Tomorrow, my friend," she said out loud. "Tomorrow, we will put our theory to the test."

"I heard you were looking for me," said Brianna to the man dressed in black standing in front of her. They were back in the Old West town, having yet another shootout.

She was dressed in what quickly was becoming her favorite cowgirl outfit. *Why break with tradition?* she thought. *Besides, it's comfortable... even the shirt!*

"That's right," he answered with that deep Russian accent that Brianna had come to know all too well. He pointed to the Colt Single Action in its holster on her right thigh. "Have you gotten any better with that?" *Wait until he finds out about my little surprise I cooked up for him!*

"Bet your ass," Brianna replied. *Goddamnit*, she thought. *Why is it my pride won't allow me to lose to this guy?*

"I have my doubts." He started to walk backwards. Brianna noticed his eyes never left her gun and he never turned his back on her. *You know, it's so refreshing to deal with a professional*, she thought. After all, she had programmed this gunfighter to be one of the best gunfighters in the Old West based on all the Western films that she could recall seeing during her lifetime.

He assumed his position and looked at her with deadly earnest intent. "Why don't you call it? It may help you beat me this time. Or get closer to it."

Now the computer is getting sneaky on me, she thought. *Somehow, it knows I can be goaded if I'm pushed too much. Either that or my psych profile must have something in there about how I don't like my pride being wounded! And he isn't even raising his voice to try to get me riled up!*

Brianna steadied herself, knowing that one way or another, everything she had worked for was now on the line. She didn't bother answering him, knowing that anything she may have said, he would have used to goad her some more. But over the years, she had learned when to be goaded and when to let it go.

From the periphery, she could see a very slight tenseness in his shoulders; now that she knew what she was looking for, she could easily see it coming.

The look of surprise on his face was worth it when she managed to not only outdraw him but put the single shot where it would do the most damage... right in the forehead. Still looking at her, his body fell backwards into the dust and stayed still.

Brianna could not believe what she was seeing.

"Computer, what was my time?" she asked, both breathless and disbelieving at the same time.

The response was instantaneous. "Your draw time was one point zero eight seconds."

"You've got to be shitting me!" she shouted with glee. "And his?"

"Projected to be one point zero one seconds."

Brianna let out a cry of joy. "Computer, pause and save that interaction. I want to see it again later!" She removed her VR glasses then called out into thin air. "Smith to Mathias!"

Almost instantly, the Australian-accented voice came over the intercom. Brianna could clearly hear the doctor putting something in her oven. "Mathias here. Go ahead, Brie."

"Dawn, I did it! I did it!" Brianna said excitedly.

"Uh... can you refresh my memory. Exactly *what* did you do?"

"I took your advice!"

Dawn paused for a second. "Sorry, Brie, but I dispense advice every day so I need a little more data."

"You said something about my gun the other day and I managed to outdraw the gunfighter!" There was another slight pause. "Dawn?"

"Sorry, I was taking out a batch of chocolate chip cookies out of the oven and putting another batch in. "You managed to outdraw him? Good for you! But what kind of advice did I give you other than do some arm therapy exercises and lose a little weight on the weapon? I *do* remember telling you I wasn't a gun expert!"

"Yeah... I used the shorter barrel! That lost just a little weight on the gun but it was enough!"

"Well, I'm happy for you, Brie. Why don't you come to my quarters and grab yourself a cookie as a prize? They're still warm and I'm making more."

Brieanna had a puzzled look. "How did you know I like my cookies warm?"

"Doesn't everyone? I've already invited Alex and Angie when you called. I was going to call Jason, Valentina, Sophie, Saavik, and Kimberly and have a little cookie get together."

Brieanna carefully placed her glasses on the small shelf in the alcove. "I'll be there in five."

"I'm counting," Dawn teased. "Mathias out."

Brieanna carefully took off her gun and holster, putting them in the bottom drawer of her dresser before walking out of her quarters with her destination being the doctor's quarters. Fortunately, all the senior and command staff officers had their quarters on deck five so it didn't take but a few minutes to walk to Dawn's stateroom.

And all the time, Brieanna was walking on air.

By the time she got to Dawn's quarters, she ran into Lieutenant Commander Jason Tovey-Whitfield and Lieutenant Kimberly Bautista. Both were also in off duty civilian clothing but what Brieanna was wearing made Brieanna stand out.

"Commander," introduced Jason.

"Brieanna," Kimberly said. She looked like she was going to comment on Brieanna's outfit when the door opened. Already there was Captain Alexander McKnight and Commander Angelica McKnight. Alex was in a white t-shirt, jeans, and tennis shoes while Angelica was in one of her leather outfits made up of a shirt, pants, and tennis shoes.

"Well, hey there," called out Dawn from the mini-kitchen she had built for her alcove. On the small counter was a jar full of cookies, two trays full of baked cookies, one pan with another unbaked batch, and a mixing bowl with more cookie batter. The whole stateroom was filled with the smell of baked cookies and Brieanna briefly wondered how Dawn was going to get to sleep with the smell of heaven in her quarters.

"Are you making enough cookies for the entire ship's company?" teased Brieanna after all of the usual greetings.

"Oh ha, ha. I just felt like making cookies tonight since my sweet tooth was acting up. What we don't eat, I'll put out in sickbay tomorrow."

"It's a miracle that your staff don't gain weight," Alex said, grabbing two cookies then walking over to the small couch, he handed one to his wife before sitting beside her. "And it's can't be good for your patients."

“A little bit to satisfy the sweet tooth won’t hurt,” Dawn shot back lightheartedly. “Especially if you’re sick.”

“And it looks like Brianna and I decided to match this evening,” Angelica teased before biting into her cookie. *How is that*, Brianna thought. *The only thing matching is our leather shirts and Angie’s is blue! And I don’t wear leather pants!*

“I don’t think I got the memo so I didn’t wear a blue shirt tonight, Angie!”

Angelica laughed. “Just teasing you, Anne! But I *am* a little surprised by you wearing a shirt like that. It looks like something I’d wear.”

“It’s what that adorable guy wore in that film. It’s.... cozy.”

“Now you are seeing why I like wearing leather clothes all the time.”

Brianna looked down at herself. “I can see why but I couldn’t wear it like you do. I just don’t have the figure.”

Alex picked that moment to jump into the fray. “Speaking of... Anne, you look like that guy from that movie I introduced to her a year ago! I didn’t think it made that much of an impression on you!”

Brianna could tease as well as take it. “Well, the guy *is* cute, after all. And they say that imitation *is* a form of flattery but why I’m not dressed as you...”

Now everyone was either laughing or chuckling. Brianna found herself giggling.

“I get it, Anne,” Alex said between guffaws. He got up to get more cookies and looked around the stateroom. “Where’s Sophie, Valentina, and Saavik?”

“Valentina’s got the duty tonight,” Brianna said. It was her job as XO to keep the *Lexington*’s personnel trained up and qualified. “She is due for her ship handling qualification.”

“Oh yes,” he said, taking four cookies before going back to his wife. “I’d forgotten you told me. And Saavik?”

It was Dawn who answered. “I think in her own polite Vulcan way, she said ‘thanks but no thanks’”

“Don’t Vulcans like chocolate chip cookies?” Kimberly asked.

“Biologically, Kimmy, there’s no reason they can’t eat these cookies. They process chocolate like we humans do. But I’m thinking Saavik doesn’t have a sweet tooth.”

“And Sophie’s busy on the impulse engines,” said Kimberly. “I ran into her on the way here and she said the maintenance was running into overtime. She was sorry she could not make it but said to save her some cookies as payment.” Kimberly looked at a nearby clock and shot up from her seat. “Good Lord, is that the time? I’ve got a reservation for the recording studio coming up in five minutes!” She looked to Angelica. “You coming, Angie?”

Surprisingly, she answered, “Not tonight. Just want to spend some time with my old man. Thanks, Kimmie.” Kimberly nodded and smiled.

“Old man?” Alex said, mock offended as Kimberly exited the stateroom. “You think of me as your ‘old man,’ do you?”

“You *are* older than me,” she said with her High Wycombe accent. “So yes, you are my old man. But you’re the old man I still love to this day.”

Dawn was looking in from her mini-kitchen. “Isn’t love sweet? If my hubby was half as loving...”

Alex turned from Angelica to look at Dawn. "I'll bet he is and you won't admit it."

Dawn speared him with a knowingly glance before turning to her oven. "I'm too much of a lady to talk about my husband in that way, thank you."

The timer on the oven dinged and Dawn rushed over to exchange batches once again. Brianna, for her part, grabbed two cookies and then took a seat near Alex and Angelica. Alex was drinking milk when Brianna sat down.

"And speaking of... congrats on earlier this evening."

Brianna looked puzzled. "What do you mean, Alex?"

"I mean on your feat you told Dawn about," he said. Brianna noticed that he was deliberately not mentioning the feat as she thought Dawn had been alone. She couldn't have known Alex and Angie were there, snacking on cookies.

"Oh," Brianna said.

"Is that all you've got to say, Anne?" asked the redhead comms officer. "Just 'oh'? It's a bloody accomplishment!"

Jason, who was sitting out of the way, looked questioningly. He was clearly lost. "What did Commander Smith do this evening, ma'am, to earn such praise?"

Alex looked to Brianna, who slightly shook her head. Internally, she was petrified as she didn't want anyone to know what she was doing. It was bad enough that Dawn knew but now Alex and Angelica knew. She didn't want anyone else to know until she was consistently good.

"It's nothing, Jason," Alex said with a tone that hinted 'don't pursue this'. And when a senior captain hints at something, it was as good as an order.

"Yes, sir," Jason replied with a slight Welsh accent.

"And it's 'Alex' since we're off duty, Jason."

"Right, Alex," said Jason, still lost but unwilling to go up against a senior captain without a *damn* good reason. He looked at the clock. "I should be going too. Can I take a few cookies up to Valentina on the bridge?"

"Wait a second," ordered Dawn. She replicated a big plate and she put many of her cookies on it. "Take this up to the bridge and pass them out. Tell them it's doctor's orders."

"Yes, Doctor." Jason picked up the plate and walked out the door. After the door shut, both Alex and Angelica turned to Brianna.

"Want to know why we know about your little off duty activity?" asked Angelica.

"Bet your sweet ass I want to know!"

"First off, don't take it out on Dawn," Alex defended. "After all, you didn't know we were here. And none of us knew she was going to play Susie Homemaker this evening and make enough cookies to give the entire crew diabetes!"

Dawn looked up from her mixer where she was mixing her final batter batch. "I heard that, Alex!" she mock-threatened. "You'd better not come to sickbay for a few days or you'll regret it!"

"Promises, promises," Alex sniggered. Dawn comically stuck her tongue out at him before she went back to her mixer. "But to answer your question, Anne, after we heard your call on the intercom, I ordered Dawn to tell me what that was all about. Good job."

"Most impressive," added the communications officer, who then took a bite of her cookie. "Remind me never to piss you off in a firefight."

“Oh shut up, you two,” Brianna said, a little embarrassed.

“It’s nothing to be ashamed of, Anne.”

“He’s right.” Angelica said as she took a sip of her milk. “Alex has a VR suite in his quarters and he flies those old-fashioned airplanes!”

Alex turned to look at her, who returned it with an innocent look of her own. “Since the cat’s out of the bag, I fly F-16’s... an aircraft where I learned to fly. And guess what Angie has in *her* alcove?”

It didn’t take a genius to figure out what she had. “A recording booth?”

Angelica beamed from ear to ear. “Exactly! And unlike you two, I don’t bother hiding it. I like to think I’m a decent singer.”

“Angie, you are a great singer,” complimented Brianna. “Hell, you started a band a couple of months ago and you’ve got several of us to play in it! It’s not hard to guess you’re *really* into music!”

“Well, I started Retroplay because I got tired of singing by myself,” Angelica countered. “And when I discovered that Kimmy here also sang... well, it wasn’t hard to figure out what needed to happen.”

“And getting back on track before the singing princess leads us down the primrose path,” interjected Alex and getting lightly hit in his upper arm by his wife, “Anne, you should be proud of yourself. Going against someone like that and winning is no mean feat. I know I wouldn’t have faired any better. Hell, I know I’d lose virtually all the time!”

“Thanks, Alex. That means a lot, coming from you.”

“Keep it up, Brie. Practice makes perfect,” said an Australian voice. They hadn’t noticed that Dawn had walked up on them with a small plate of cookies and a glass of milk for herself. “But I hope not to see you in my sickbay anytime soon.”

“That’s a promise, Dawn,” chuckled Brianna. “That is a promise.”