

STAR TREK

The Lexington Adventures

THIS IS
MY LIFE

AN ORIGINAL SHORT STORY BY JOEY BONICE

“This is My Life”

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

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“Lieutenant Bautista’s Personal Log, Stardate 8461.16. *Lexington* has returned to her homeport of Newport News as she is receiving repairs after our encounter with the *Red Talon*, a modified Romulan Z-1 battleship. Captain McKnight has given the entire staff some time off so I decided to return to the Philippines and see if I can get some relaxation... that is, if my family doesn’t decide to butt in and ruin it like they usually try to do.”

When Kimberly Bautista woke up that morning in the Manila Hotel, she was feeling rather formal so she had dressed in a three-piece, custom-tailored suit made of leather, like she had seen her friend wear a couple of times on the Federation starship *Lexington*. In the old days, it would have been insane to wear leather clothing while on the streets of Manila simply due to the high temperatures and humidity. But after the Third World War, weather regulators had been installed so the oppressive heat and humidity were a thing of the past. Kimberly could easily wear her leather suit while out and about and not worry about melting or dripping sweat.

Another success story was that the Philippines had been virtually untouched during the war and that was one of the enabling factors for Earth’s rapid recovery. The Philippines had finally stepped onto the world stage and it was now one of the biggest economies in Asia, nipping right on the heels of a reunited Korea and Japan. And strolling in Manila was like walking around Seoul or London as being a modern supercity and Manila was now also one of the safest cities on the planet.

About mid-morning, Kimberly was walking down Rizal Avenue in late 23rd Century Manila. She was listening to her favorite radio station... ‘radio’ being an archaic term still being used in the 23rd Century because no one had decided on what else to call it. She lightly touched one of her earphones to raise the volume a little and smiled slightly, listening to a story that the DJ (another hold over term) had the previous evening with her boyfriend. Kimberly started to walk past a Jollibee, a Filipino fast food national treasure, when, on cue, her stomach rumbled, bringing up pleasant memories having of having a good Chickenjoy and Jolly Spaghetti when she was a child. Kimberly smiled and entered the busy restaurant.

It took a couple of minutes for Kimberly to make it to the counter as it was busy, even this early in the morning. Unlike many of their modern competitors, Jollibee still used their original recipe and hand cooked their meals. So even though it took some time to get the customers their food, it still tasted better than the food that came out of the replicators... or so it seemed to the *Lexington*’s tactical officer.

Kimberly made her usual order of Chickenjoy and Jolly Spaghetti, though the boy at the counter had given her a little more than an appreciative look at her. *More likely, he’s liking what I am wearing instead of looking at my body*, she thought. *Though I don’t think I am a slouch in the body department either. I don’t think I look bad for a 41-year-old!* She took the buzzer and found an empty two-person table by the window so she could look out at the busy street and people watch. She quickly ponytailed her dark brown hair but kept her headphones on, wishing to keep listening to the station and the funny DJ as she ate.

The food came quicker than she had expected, though it had been delivered by a robot. She grinned, thinking that the *Lexington*’s chief engineer would have loved to have seen it then seen what made it work. Kimberly looked out the window as she ate, just

enjoying the view and the food. She was planning on taking a stroll around Intramuros before heading back to her hotel and an honest-to-God bubble bath.

It didn't take her long to finish eating and calling over the robot to clean the table. She walked out into the sunny day and it took her a minute to realign her bearings. Once she figured out where she was, Kimberly began to walk to the old Spanish fortress that once made up the heart of Manila. She figured it would be only a kilometer's walk or more but as she walked, she started to realize that maybe she had underestimated the distance.

Kimberly was about to hail a cab to take her to Fort Santiago when there was a sudden ringing in her ears, indicating there was an incoming call. She was startled for a second but she knew from the tone and type of ring that the call was local. She tapped a hidden button on the right earphone.

"Hello. Kimberly Bautista here."

She recognized the voice on the other end and instantly regretted taking this phone call.

"Kimberly, my dear," came the voice of her mother without any pleasantries, "how come I have to find out from your starship that you are back in Manila?"

Kimberly cursed in Tagalog but not loudly enough for the built in microphone to catch it. Being on the *Lexington's* command staff, she had to report her whereabouts to the Command Duty Officer (CDO) when they were on leave. She had listed Manila as her destination on her paperwork but it did surprise her that the CDO would have told her mother *that* information.

"What do you want, Mother?" she said impatiently as she looked for some shade to sit in. Not finding a bench or chair in which to sit, she did find some shade so she sat on her haunches as she spoke.

"Straight to the point as always, Kimberly." *That's calling the kettle black*, Kimberly thought. *You didn't even ask me how I was doing!* "I'm calling on behalf of your father. He wants to speak to you concerning your current marital status."

"*At ang mga tao sa impyerno ay gusto ng tubig na yelo*¹," Kimberly shot back, just a little heated. She hated her family trying to interfere with her love life. "*Anong pakialam mo sa estado ng pag-aasawa ko?*"²

"Can you speak English, please?" requested her mother. "And as we're your parents, I think we have a right to know who you are seeing and if not, if we can fix that for you."

"*Parang impyerno ang ginagawa mo*³," Kimberly continued. "*Kung sino ang pakakasalan ko ay sarili kong alalahanin at wala kang pakialam.*"⁴

"I'm not about to argue with you, young lady." Now her mother was getting loud, causing Kimberly to turn the volume down in her headphones. "I'm just the middle man so you need to talk to your father."

¹ Tagalog: "And people in hell want ice water."

² Tagalog: "What business is it of yours concerning my marital status?"

³ Tagalog: "Like hell you do."

⁴ Tagalog: "Who I marry is my own concern and none of your concern."

“If it’s about meeting me just so he can marry me someone he thinks will gain him some business,” Kimberly shot back in English, “he’d have better luck in taking a ride on the *Titanic*. I won’t meet him and I won’t marry anyone you two pick, especially someone that you’re trying to set me up just so you will grow your business.”

Her mother was now getting impatient. “I’m going to leave that between you and your father. He wants to see you *right now*.”

Kimberly shook her head, dislodging her headphones. She readjusted them before answering, “I don’t care *what* he is ordering. I take my orders from Starfleet, not from the man who claims to be my father! *Hindi ako alipin mo kaya umalis ka na* ⁵!” She tapped the button again, cutting off the call before her mother could respond. She took a few deep breaths to calm herself down.

She thought, *God, how I hate being born a Campos!*

The rest of the day took on an ominous tone since Kimberly received that call. She had taken a cab to Fort Santiago with her mother calling her every thirty seconds. It got to the point that Kimberly blocked the number but it didn’t take long before she received another call. She didn’t bother answering, knowing her mother would have asked someone (more likely one of her siblings) to call her then commandeer the conversation. Kimberly had to resort to put her headphones around her neck but she could still hear it ringing every few minutes. She suspected that since she was refusing to answer, it would not be long before her parents would send someone to tail her, then report back to them about where she was going and maybe find out why their youngest daughter was actively disobeying them.

As for why she was disobeying... that was the easy part. Kimberly Sabulao Bautista was once known as Kimberly Sabulao Campos. She may have biologically belonged to the powerful tycoon family but she felt she had never been emotionally a part of the family. Kimberly had even gone so far as to legally change her name from Campos to Bautista, starting the process on the day she turned 18. As soon as the paperwork processed, she went down to the Starfleet enlistment office and enlisted under her new name of Kimberly Sabulao Bautista.

While she walked around Intramuros, she managed to glimpse a young Filipino woman in a non-descript business suit following her. Had Kimberly not gotten some counterintelligence training in Starfleet, she probably would not have noticed the girl trying hard to keep Kimberly in her sight. But then, Kimberly wasn’t hard to find. How many other Filipinas were dressed in a three-piece leather business suits walking around Manila at this time of day? But the fact that she was being followed didn’t deter Kimberly from sightseeing but seeing the spy having issues with keeping track on her, it made Kimberly determined that she was going to make sure that the spy was going to earn her pay for the day. It also served to annoy her.

Kimberly continued to walk around Intramuros until lunchtime, then headed to a popular eating spot for a traditional Filipino lunch. After a while, Kimberly didn’t see her tail so she had hoped she might have had lost her. As she finished her meal, she put her

⁵ Tagalog: “I’m not your slave so **** off.”

headphones back on (the ringing had finally stopped) and tuned in to a popular DJ show while drinking a tall cup of coconut water.

When she had finished her drink, Kimberly casually strolled over to Rizal Park. She found a bench under a big and old shade tree and sat down, content to people watch. Kimberly's relief evaporated when she saw her shadow appear again, obviously trying to hide the fact that she was tailing the Starfleet officer. Kimberly slightly smiled at the attempt; the spy could not have known that Kimberly already knew she was being tailed. It was one of her father's favorite ploys to put a tail on one of his children who had displeased him, then ran away. It was obvious that by tailing his youngest child by proxy that he was hoping to shake her up enough that Kimberly would either call or go to the family compound, all just to find out what her old man would want. But if Kimberly's encounters with the Klingons, Romulans, or Orions could not rattle her, she sincerely doubted her father could accomplish something those races could not.

However, as she watched people walking past her, Kimberly knew that she would have to face her parents once more.

And she had decided that this would be their last confrontation.

It was getting towards evening before Kimberly finally made the decision to visit her family's compound in Makati City and put this entire business to rest. She stayed in the park the entire afternoon but kept moving around, if for nothing else but to make her shadow's life hell. Kimberly had even let her close on her once, just so she could just make out her shadow talking to someone. That further annoyed Kimberly.

Finally, Kimberly hailed a cab and gave an address. She didn't even look back to see if her shadow had also made it and by now, Kimberly was getting mad enough to not really care. She put her headphones back around her neck, pulled her hair out from the headband, and ponytailed her hair so it would be free to swing.

As the taxi moved through the early evening traffic, Kimberly mentally braced herself for her upcoming confrontation with her father and getting even angrier as she thought over things. Ever since she was a teenager, her father had tried to arrange a marriage for her with various men but Kimberly had sabotaged each and every one of his attempts. But the fact that her father was trying it again when she was on leave was making her livid. Infuriated that he didn't seem to be worried or concerned about her well-being but was bent only on getting her married to another tycoon family's son.

I'll be damned if I get married to a complete stranger, she thought. This is my life and my choice to marry whoever I want and the old man can't get that through his head! My brothers and sisters may be content with their interference but it's not me! I'll marry who I want when I want to marry, not because that old bastard says so!

It was starting to get dark when she arrived at her family's compound in Makati City. Kimberly gave her thumbprint to the driver and got out, allowing her anger to have full rein, which made her oblivious to the driver's amazed reaction. The automated gate recognized her and obediently opened to admit her. She stomped to the main door and opened it without announcing herself.

Just as Kimberly predicted, there was no one there to meet her and this only added to her anger. It also reinforced the idea that her parents only want her married to only

further their business dealings. She strode across the foyer towards her father's library. No one was visible but that didn't mean that no one was around and weren't watching.

Kimberly walked over to her father's study and without pause, Kimberly opened the solid wood doors and without breaking stride, she burst opened the door and walked into her father's sanctuary like she owned the place. Her father's study was a big, two-story affair with a beautiful view of Metro Manila in the windows. His desk was currently facing away from the windows and towards some computer monitors built into the bookcase, displaying stock market data from across the Federation.

The man sitting behind the huge oak desk even looked like a businessman, dressed in a tailored three-piece gray suit not unlike what Kimberly was wearing, just a different material. There was no sign of surprise or shock on Filomino Campos' face. Had Kimberly been less angry, she would have noticed that her father was wearing his famous poker face, a face that may have given a run for Captain McKnight's poker face. And she knew from experience that Captain McKnight had the best poker face she had ever seen.

"*Ano ba sa tingin mo ang ginagawa mo, Ama?*"⁶ Kimberly shouted without any pleasantries. "*Mas mabuti pa, ano sa tingin mo ang mapapala mo rito ngayon?*"⁷

In contrast to her outburst, Filomino was calm, cool, and collected, which only served to infuriate his daughter even more. "Why hello there, Kimberly," he said in English. "So good that you could make the time to come and see your father."

"Oh, sod off," spat Kimberly, unwittingly using a term she had heard from one of her friends on the *Lexington*. "Just who do you think you are to marry me off like some piece of meat? Or do you think I am the sort of woman who *needs* her father to marry her off?"

Filomino sat back in his seat, crossing his fingers across his chest and calm as a cucumber. If he was disturbed by his daughter's outbursts, he did not show it. "I'm only concerned about the welfare of the only daughter who hasn't married like she should have been already. Since you won't get married, I will do it for you. I've already picked him out for you. And after your date tonight..."

She slammed her fists on his desk hard enough to rattle his tea cup. "And just who do you think you are to make those decisions for me? This is *my* goddamned life, not yours! I'm *not* going on *any* date you've set up and it'll be a cold day in hell before I will!"

Filomino sighed, the only sign he gave that he was even slightly paying attention to Kimberly's outbursts. "Kimberly, I am your father and I think that gives me the right to be concerned about your marital status."

If she wasn't already wasn't incensed, that comment would have set her off. "No! What you mean is you're concerned about your little empire here, not about your daughter's feelings on the matter!" She leaned forward. "Why should you give a *tinker's damn* if I am married or not?"

Her father kept his calm, which only served to fuel Kimberly's anger even more. "You do not need to be on a starship and risking your life for people who don't care for you or even know you even exist. You need to be home and raising a family, not traipsing among the stars where you definitely do not belong."

⁶ Tagalog: "What the hell do you think you are doing, Father?"

⁷ Tagalog: "Better yet, just what do you think you're going to gain here today?"

Kimberly huffed. “Oh f---,” she paused just long enough to catch her breath. “You don’t have to remind me that both you and Mother both opposed me entering Starfleet, especially after I told you I wanted to enlist!”

“I didn’t raise a daughter to die in space. I raised her to give me grandchildren and obey her parents. I certainly don’t want to lose her to the vagaries of Starfleet.”

That spoke volumes. It served to convince Kimberly that her father all but admitted that he simply would marry her off to get her out of Starfleet and to give him grandchildren. For Kimberly, Starfleet was in her blood since she could remember and she could not imagine *not* being in Starfleet. Though she didn’t have the grades to become an officer, she did enlist as a crewman first class and made it to the rank of Senior Chief Petty Officer before she was accepted in a highly sought after “green to gold” (an enlisted-to-officer) program with a 50% washout rate. She had become an officer and felt pride that she didn’t need Filomino’s help in doing it any of it. But with what he had just said, along with its implications, was the straw that broke the camel’s back, as the saying goes. Kimberly came to a decision. *And I should have done this years ago*, she thought.

“You know what?” Kimberly said, coming to attention without realizing it, “You already lost her. I’m done.”

That got Filomino’s full attention. “*What?*” he said, finally showing some emotion. “What did you say to me, young lady?”

“YOU HEARD ME GODDAMNED WELL!” she shouted, the years of frustration finally pouring out of her. “WHAT YOU MEAN IS, ‘DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE WHAT YOU SAID’? WELL, I MEANT WHAT I SAID! I’M DONE WITH YOU AND I’M DONE WITH THIS GODDAMNED FAMILY!”

“Watch what you say, Kimberly,” Filomino said. “You may say something that cannot be taken back.”

“TO BLOODY HELL WITH THAT! DON’T YOU GET IT? YOU HAVE LOST ME AS A DAUGHTER,” she repeated without any hesitation. “I’M LEAVING AND NEVER COMING BACK!”

Now Filomino stood up and leaned towards Kimberly. “You should be careful with what you are saying, especially when your emotions are running high. You may regret what you are saying.”

“*Parang impyerno na gagawin ko* ⁸, Filomino!” Kimberly said defiantly, feeling a strange kind of relief getting to vent her rage on Filomino. “I meant every word I said. *Lalayas ako at hinding-hindi na ako babalik*⁹! *Huwag na huwag mo nang itatawag sa akin ang ‘anak’*¹⁰!” Kimberly turned on her heel and walked off, leaving a flabbergasted Filomino in her wake.

Without thinking, Kimberly walked to the second floor and her old bedroom. As she walked into the room, she was amazed that it looked exactly like the day she left for Starfleet. It was like stepping back to her teenager days. Her old clothes were still hanging on the racks, posters of boy bands from thirty years ago still hung on the walls, and her bed

⁸ Tagalog: “Like hell I will”

⁹ Tagalog: “I am leaving and I am never, ever coming back!”

¹⁰ Tagalog: “Don’t you dare ever call me ‘child’ again!”

was still outfitted the way she had left it. It was almost like someone had locked the door the day she left.

The Starfleet officer closed and locked the door before slowly walking around the room, unconsciously putting her headphones back on, which was playing slow and heartrending music. She took in the sight before stopping at the foot of the post bed. Memories, both good and bad, came flooding back to her and she slid down until she made contact with the floor. When she sat down, she began to cry uncontrollably. She didn't regret at what she had just done but she did regret never having the childhood she never got. Even as a child, her parents told her how to act, how to eat, how to dress, even how to wear her hair. Kimberly felt out of place in her own home.

But after what had just transpired, she knew she would never come back. Her home now was the *Lexington*. And it wasn't with a lot of soul searching that she found that she could easily live with that decision.

But the tears would not stop. And they would not stop for another ten minutes.

About an hour later, Kimberly marched out the front door of her ex-family's home. She was carrying a big brown leather duffle bag on her left shoulder, packed with some of her childhood items that she wanted to keep. She knew no one would miss what she had taken but they were the only things from her childhood that brought her good memories. Kimberly felt no remorse in taking these few items with her.

Kimberly took a few steps before semi turning around so she could face her former home one last time. For a millisecond, she hoped that someone would pop out the door and beg her to reconsider. But no one was there and the lights in the foyer were off so that gave Kimberly her answer. It only served to confirm that she was serious about cutting them off and apparently, the feeling was mutual. Kimberly had three brothers and four sisters, all older than her and all married whom their parents had arranged for them to marry. The boys were in the Campos family business as major Starfleet contractors and all the girls were housewives. She didn't feel that any of them would even miss their youngest sibling and given that no one had come to comfort or see her off only served to reinforce that impression.

She shifted the bag on her shoulder and turned to walk away, trying to fight tears stemming from the pain of leaving the building for the final time. Through her headphones, the voice of the smooth-talking late-night DJ wasn't helping her feelings. Kimberly angrily wiped tears away as she walked through the gate and into Makati City proper. She walked for a while before coming across a taxi stand. As she got into the taxi, she told the driver to take her to the Manila Hotel.

During the trip back to the hotel, she found that her feelings had translated into ones of freedom, relief, and liberation. Feeling like this, she started to think on what she would do next. Kimberly knew she had to get out of Manila and during the long trip back to the hotel, she thought of several in-country destinations before she had decided on one spot she had always wanted to see. Given what had happened, this would be the perfect time to go to check it out and try to enjoy what leave she had remaining.

It took about 40 minutes for the cab to reach the hotel, which was located on the bayfront. She once again gave her thumbprint, gathered her belongings, and got out,

walking to the main door. On her way to the old-style elevators, the front desk clerk tried to get her attention.

“Ms. Bautista?”

Kimberly realized that she was still wearing her headphones so she put them around her neck and pulled her ponytail out so her hair would be able to swing free as she talked.

“Yes?”

“I’ve several messages for you, miss.” He tried to give her a PADD but Kimberly stopped him by holding her hand up.

“Sorry but I’m not taking any messages.” She thought for a second. “Would any of them be from a Mrs. Campos?”

He looked at the screen. “Yes, ma’am. All of them. But shouldn’t you take a look?”

“No,” Kimberly countered. “I would appreciate it if you would delete them. Thank you.” She turned and walked away without waiting for an answer. She adjusted her bag’s strap on her shoulder as she got into the old-style elevator and selected the fifteenth floor where her room was located.

On the way, she got to thinking. *My mother must have used her connections to find out where I was staying. Or the same woman I saw tailing me earlier saw me coming out of this hotel. Either way, they know where I am staying. Just in case Filomino or Maria decide to change their mind about me disowning them, I’ve got to get the hell out of Manila!*

The elevator stopped and Kimberly got out, who immediately headed for her room. She entered almost joyously. Luckily for her, most of her belongings were still packed, as she tended to not to unpack things until she needed them. It didn’t take long for her to pack all her things into the bigger duffle bag she had brought with her, taking care to carefully place her childhood things alongside her clothes, toiletries, and accessories. It was a tight fit but it worked. She picked up her now full bag and went back to the lobby, where the same front desk clerk was working.

“Excuse me but I would like to check out,” said Kimberly.

“Yes, ma’am. I can help you with that. But before I do, I must ask if you are sure you want to check out. You still have a reservation for a few more days”

‘That’s a no-brainer’ as the captain would say, thought Kimberly. “Yes, I’m sure. There’s nothing wrong. I just need to get out of town.” The clerk looked at her and that when Kimberly realized what she said didn’t sound good so she decided to lie her way out of it. “I just got recalled by my ship. Starfleet business, you understand.”

“I understand,” he said, clearly not understanding but not wanting to pry. He worked his console for a few moments. “And you’re all checked out, Ms. Bautista. Is there anything else I can help you with?”

“Yes. Can you summon me a taxi so I can get to the nearest public transporter complex?”

Twenty minutes later, she was on Boracay Island. The walk from the transporter complex to the beachfront was pleasant. The nighttime had cooled things off, actually making her thankful she was still wearing her leather suit though she had loosened her tie and unbuttoned her collar. The night sky was cloudless and she could make out the various stars in the sky. She decided to keep her headphones around her neck and it made

looking up at the stars a bit problematic but she didn't pay it any mind. She had never visited Boracay before but, like most other Filipinos, she knew the island's reputation of being a paradise. And after what she had been through this evening, she felt she needed a slice of heaven on earth.

Kimberly walked along the beach before finding herself in front of the Mandarin Bay Spa and Resort. Again, she knew this was one of the more luxurious hotels on the island so it would suit her needs. She hoped that they would have a room available, as people were not allowed to sleep on the beach. There were only a few die hards and night owls in the lounge and pool area as she walked over to the check in desk. She put her bag on the floor as the night clerk greeted her.

"Good evening," Kimberly said, "I know it's late and I may be out of luck but might you have a room available?"

The young Filipina worked her screen. "We may but I'll need to check. Do you have a reservation, Ms...?"

"Miss Kimberly Bautista. And no, I didn't get a chance to make a reservation before I left." Kimberly smiled, turning on the charm. "An oversight on my part. This is kind of a last-second thing that wasn't properly planned out." *I think I've been hanging around my British friend too much, she thought. I seem to have picked up her habit of understatement! I've just minimized the biggest paradigm shift in my life!*

"I see." It took a few moments before the clerk looked up from her console. "You're in luck, Miss Bautista. We've a room available... a West Premiere Twin room. It's not seaside..."

"That's fine," Kimberly interrupted, unzipping her vest. "I just need it for a couple of days, if I can do that."

"Yes, ma'am." A couple more taps. "How long do you need the room?"

"I think about three days," she answered. *Long enough to get some sun and surf, she thought. God, I really need some beach time, especially after what's happened this evening!*

"We can do that," the clerk said. "Can I get some ID?"

Kimberly unzipped her small leather belt bag hanging on her left hip and produced her Starfleet ID. The clerk looked at it for a moment then nodded. Kimberly put the ID back in the bag.

"Thank you for that. I managed to get you the Starfleet discount, Miss Bautista. We just need a thumbprint and you will be set." Kimberly put her right thumb on the reader, which glowed for a moment.

"Thank you," she said as the machine recorded her thumbprint.

"Got it," the clerk said as the machine shut itself off. "It's room 1709 in the west tower." The clerk produced a map of the resort and showed the Starfleet officer where the room was. Kimberly had to appreciate the irony of the room number being the same as the registry number of the ship on which she was currently serving.

"Thank you once again," said Kimberly, picking up her bag and placed it on her left shoulder. "I appreciate your kindness."

"Thank you. Enjoy your stay, Miss Bautista."

Since it was so late, there was no one as she walked the poolside path to her room. Kimberly could even hear some lovers at play very faintly coming from the other rooms as she walked the halls but she was too tired to really pay much attention. She came to her room, opened the door, and dropped her bag beside the door. Kimberly carefully removed her headphones from her neck and put them on the bed stand.

Kimberly fell onto the bed, already asleep before her head hit the pillow.

Late the next morning, Kimberly was laying on the beach, wearing a brown leather bikini and sunglasses. She was sitting on a white towel she had borrowed from the hotel and she brought her communicator, as was the policy for all Starfleet officers on a command staff. She had forced herself to wake up early and come out to the beach early, setting up on a good spot where she would get a good dose of the sun while having a nice view of the ocean. She enjoyed being under natural sunlight instead of getting her dose of Vitamin E from the artificial lights found on Federation starships, though she really didn't need it as Filipinos were naturally tan. As she enjoyed herself under the sun, the tourists and local crowds were thickening up, making Kimberly glad she had forced herself awake early. Had she waited, she'd have a devil of a time finding even a halfway decent spot in which to sunbathe.

By her count, she had nearly dozed off three times when her communicator suddenly went off. Kimberly literally jumped a couple of inches, then silently wished she hadn't left her headphones in her room. Some people looked at her for disturbing their vacations but fortunately for her, most of the crowd ignored her.

She flipped the communicator lid opened. "Bautista here."

"Lieutenant Bautista," came the voice of Commander Angelica McKnight, the *Lexington's* communication officer, "This is *Lexington*, Commander McKnight. Am I disturbing you?"

Kimberly couldn't help but tease her friend. She said with a devilish smile, "Would it make you jealous that you're disrupting me from a very physical activity with a male friend I just met last night?"

She could hear the laughter in Angelica's voice, even though the Englishwoman didn't laugh. "I'd give you time to enjoy it but unfortunately, I have to tell you to you'd better zip up and dress up. Our repairs and upgrades are done so we're deploying."

Kimberly didn't bother covering her surprise. "We're deploying *already*? I thought we had a few days left."

"Blame those dockyard wankers. They got the job done earlier than anyone expected. And as soon as they reported they were done, Starfleet issued our orders. We're to depart in 56 hours."

Kimberly nodded, knowing that Angelica could not see the gesture. "Understood," she said, getting up, knowing her vacation was over but sad that she didn't get to enjoy Boracay more. *Maybe next time*. "Lock in on my coordinates."

A pause. "You're in *Boracay*? Lucky you! We were in New York. I've never been there and I wanted to see the city and sights. Alex hated every second of it, but he lit up when he saw that ancient aircraft carrier in the harbor... believe it was the *Intrepid*?"

"Sounds right," Kimberly said, picking up her towel and dusting the sand off her feet and legs. "The captain likes visiting those old ships."

"Yeah, tell me about it," Angelica chuckled. "Anyway, how long do you need to wrap up and be ready to beam up?"

"Give me twenty minutes if I don't call you first. Bautista out." She snapped the lid shut and walked straight back to her room. She took a very quick sonic shower to make sure she didn't have any sand on her, then dressed in her suit from the previous day, though she didn't bother taking off the bikini, kept the tie off, and left both the blazer and vest unbuttoned. Since she had only unpacked her bikini and toiletries, it took only a few moments to pack the toiletries back up.

Kimberly quickly walked down to the front desk and swiftly checked out. When that was done, she picked up her bag and walked over to the lobby, opening her communicator. "Bautista to *Lexington*."

The reply was instant. "*Lexington*. Commander McKnight."

"Angie, I'm ready to beam up."

As she spoke, a little girl, who looked no more than 6 years old, broke away from her parents, who were getting ready to check in, waddled up to Kimberly and looked up at her. Kimberly looked down and smiled broadly at the child, who returned the smile.

"Can you go somewhere else?" said Angelica over the communicator. "The transporter chief's reporting that he can't get a solid lock on you."

"I thought the transporter was fully repaired and operational!"

"They are! I think the chief is being a little too careful."

All the while, Kimberly kept looking at the child, who was looking up at her.

"*Sino ang kausap mo*¹¹?" the little girl finally said.

"*Kausap ko ang isang kaibigan ko*¹²," Kimberly replied, smiling. "*Nasa itaas siya ng isang starship*¹³."

"Oh wow," said the child. "*Gusto kong makasakay sa isang starship balang araw*¹⁴!"

"Mag-aaral kang mabuti at makinig sa iyong mga magulang at balang araw, sasakay ka rin sa isang barkong pangkalawakan, munting bata¹⁵," said Angelica over the communicator. Kimberly quietly chuckled; she had forgotten that Angelica had *really* good hearing.

"Couldn't have said it better myself," Kimberly said as her parents saw their daughter conversing with the Starfleet officer. They collected their offspring and quickly apologized for their child's disrupting the elder Filipina.

"She's no bother," Kimberly said in English. She winked at the little girl. "I hope to see you among the stars, little one."

Two minutes later, Kimberly was gone.

¹¹ Tagalog: "Who are you talking to?"

¹² Tagalog: "I'm talking to a friend of mine"

¹³ Tagalog: "She's up on a starship"

¹⁴ Tagalog: "I want to be on a starship one day!"

¹⁵ Tagalog: "You study hard and listen to your parents and one day, you will be on a starship, little girl."

A day later, Kimberly was working on the phaser fire control system. The system had developed an error. Specifically, the system was refusing to stay locked on target and the phasers were slipping to the left of the intended target. When the *Lexington* had been commissioned, the fire control system had developed the same error. On the surface, it seemed easy to fix but it had been Kimberly's experience that these types of errors were not that easy to fix. It took Kimberly and Lieutenant Commander Saavik two days to trace the issue down to a piece of code and fix it. It appeared that the dockyard workers had unintentionally reinstalled the original code from a backup copy but Kimberly and Saavik had the foresight to put their modified code in protected memory so it would not take Kimberly long to recall their code from the computer and reinstall it.

She had the code almost installed when she was paged over the intercom. "Captain McKnight to Lieutenant Bautista."

Kimberly automatically straightened. Luckily, the *Lexington* had been outfitted with the new intercom system which didn't require a terminal to use. "Bautista here," she called out loud.

"Lieutenant, can you come to my ready room, please?"

The captain's use of her rank worried her. Unless there was a reason or he was pissed, Captain McKnight was rather informal when it came to his use of ranks, preferring to use a person's first name when possible. But from the use of her rank and the tone of his voice, she thought it was the second option but she could not readily think why he would be mad at her.

"Yes, sir," she responded and walked across the bridge to the captain's ready room. It was actually an executive-type office that could be found on a starbase or Starfleet Headquarters but he was paying tribute to his aviator roots when he would call it his 'ready room'. She waited until he called for her to enter his inner sanctum.

"Come in."

Kimberly came in and walked through the compartment until she was in front of Captain McKnight's ancient oak desk. He was reading something on his computer monitor and hadn't looked up at her. Kimberly came to attention and waited until he released her. While saluting had gone pretty much by the wayside, coming to attention hadn't. He released her with a wave of his hand but he had taken longer than usual so she knew something was up.

"Why don't you sit down, Lieutenant." His tone was flat but she could tell he wasn't happy. She also knew an order when she heard one so Kimberly sat down in one of the two comfortable seats in front of his desk.

"We've got a problem and you're going to help me solve it," he said without preamble.

"Certainly, Captain," she lied cheerfully. "Anything I can do to help."

"Don't be too quick to say that. This is a problem of your making, Lieutenant."

She thought she knew what he was talking about but he also had a bad habit of talking about one thing then hitting you with something else completely out of left field.

"Sir?"

"We may have a security issue. There may be someone aboard who isn't who aren't exactly who they say that are."

“Yes, sir.” It was then that she knew exactly what the captain was talking about but when he was in this foul a mood, it was best to let him get whatever it was off his mind before you said anything. If you assumed to jump in before he was finished, he would not hesitate to very loudly chew your ass from here to doomsday. She had done that once before and regretted it.

“I have a ‘Kimberly Bautista’ who’s assigned to my staff but someone called up the other day asking for a ‘Kimberly Campos’ who was supposed to be on my staff. As we don’t have a ‘Kimberly Campos’, the person was told she was mistaken but the duty officer started an investigation to be sure we didn’t have an imposter.” He finally looked at her. “I’m reading the results of that investigation. You care to explain to me why you changed your name?”

Kimberly hesitated. “It’s rather personal, Captain.”

His tone turned hard. “When it comes to this ship’s security, privacy takes a back seat, Lieutenant. I know you know that. What I want to know is who is this ‘Kimberly Campos’ and why someone would call this ship and ask for her when there’s only a ‘Kimberly Bautista’ on our staff.” Kimberly hesitated. “Consider it an order, Lieutenant.”

Kimberly sighed, secretly praying that the odds would go her way. “I was born Kimberly Campos. Sir.”

He still did not look at her but his tone conveyed what he was thinking. “I see. Well, to be honest, I’m sure that’s in some section of your personnel file but I don’t remember reading it when I vetted you for this assignment.” He took a drink of water from a cup sitting on the desk. “So that one’s on me. But why did you assume the name ‘Bautista’?”

“Because I hate my family,” she said, resentment in her tone as she thought back to her last conversation with her father. “My parents don’t give a damn about me and I hate them for it! Sir.”

She paused, collecting herself and knowing that she had to explain a lot more so Captain McKnight would understand. For his part, had finally looked up at her and he gave no indication what he was thinking. *No wonder he was an excellent poker player*, she thought. *Is he going to go easy on me or go hard?*

“The day I turned 18, sir, I went down to the Local Civil Registrar and had my last name changed from Campos to Bautista. Once the proceedings were finalized and I became Kimberly Bautista... that very day, I went down to the local Starfleet recruiting office and enlisted. I left my family behind and I didn’t look back.”

McKnight said, still not indicating what he thought. “You still didn’t tell me why you took the name ‘Bautista’.”

“Sir, it’s the Filipino equivalent to ‘Smith’ or ‘Jones’. I didn’t want a name that would stand out or a name that my family could easily trace to me.”

That got his attention. “So why do you hate your family so much that you basically disowned them?”

She thought for a second, thinking there may be a gap in the captain’s knowledge concerning her home country. “I did disown them, sir. Do you know anything about the Philippines?”

“My uncle was married to a Filipina but that’s it,” he admitted. “Otherwise, I admit I don’t know a whole lot about the Philippines or its culture. You’re the first Filipino that I’ve spent any meaningful time with.”

“Sir, the name ‘Campos’ is a very powerful name in the Philippines. It’s what you would call a ‘tycoon family’. My father is a wealthy businessman with big contracts with the Federation and Starfleet; in fact, he runs one of the biggest contractors for Starfleet. One time, I even heard he was considering running for public office.”

“Got the background but it still does not explain why you disowned them.”

“Because making money was more important than one of their daughters,” she confessed. “They never did care about me. They cared more about my brothers and sisters since they were so obliging to my parents and their wishes. I wasn’t like that. I have a mind of my own and I follow my own heart, sir.”

That seemed to mollify the captain, if his tone was any indication. “How long ago did you disown them?”

“I left home at 18 and until a couple of days ago, I’ve barely any contact with them. They interrupted my leave in Manila so they could arrange a marriage for me.”

“Arranged marriages?” He shook his head. “Thought that went out of style.”

“Not for old and powerful families like the Campos, sir,” she explained. “But I’m my own person and I will marry whoever I want, not who my parents want me to marry. I made the final break with my parents over this and I can safely say that I’m completely done with them, sir.”

Captain McKnight finally leaned back in his chair. “While I don’t fully understand your situation with your family, I can empathize with how you feel. I was always close to my parents but I do know someone who is in a similar situation and may be of some help to you.”

That statement got Kimberly interested. “Who would that be, sir?”

“You can stop with that ‘sir’ stuff. The person I’m talking about is my wife.”

Kimberly got a puzzled look on her face. “Angelica? How can *she* help *me*, Captain?”

Alex sighed before talking. “Commander McKnight also ran away from home to Starfleet. She’s also virtually disowned her family. Only in her case, it was the royal family of the UK so while she didn’t *quite* disown her mother, she’s barely talked to her in over 20 years.”

Kimberly’s surprise wasn’t completely unexpected. “I didn’t know *that*. She rarely talks about her family. But then, she’s more interested in singing and music than discussing family matters with her friends!”

McKnight laughed a little. “Well, it’s not something she normally advertises. I think if you approach her and tell her what you told me; you’ll find that singing and music aren’t the only things you two have in common.”

“It’s amazing on how little I know my friends,” she said, amazed.

“Yeah, I think you need to talk to her and you’ll find out that she can help you more than I can in this matter.” He stopped and took another drink of water. “I’m convinced that you’ve told me the truth so I’m no longer annoyed at you but next time, come to me with

that info, even if you don't think it will come to bite you. Consider your ass chewed, Kimmie. Dismissed."