

# Flight of the Yorktown

## Chapter 1

Captain's log, Stardate (BLANK): We've arrived at BLANK, the Chakat home world. [We will be performing some sort of dull 4 - 24 hour thing.] I have allowed shore leave for all departments, except for Engineering and Cosmology(?).

Lt. Simona has asked me time again for an opportunity to run a Level 1 diagnostic on the warp engines. Why she would want to take everything apart when it's running just fine is beyond me, but, since we won't be needing them while we are in orbit, I have given her my permission.

Lt. Weelissk Besslark has agreed to Lt. Esaw's request for OPS to handle shore leave rotations for the Science department, directly. It seems that our Chief Science Officer can't concentrate on anything else but his experiments. He's convinced that he can break the Warp 10 barrier, create a stable artificial worm hole, something even more fantastic. I'm convinced he will either succeed or go insane trying. We needed him for our patrol of the Tholian border, and now we're stuck with him.

Lastly, we will be taking on yet one more Academy graduate, Ensign Waterweaver, a Xeno Biology specialist. Shi was originally assigned to join the rest of her graduating class on the Forrestal, but a family emergency sent her back to her home world. Now I'm stuck with her. As if this Excelsior Project/Program hasn't stuck me with enough green crew members as is.

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Lieutenant Junior Grade Spencer stepped out of the sonic shower. He stood in front of the mirror and watched the reflection of a 5 foot five inch, well-built, chimpanzee flex his muscles for a minute. He then started to blush his hair. Minutes later, he was stepping out of his quarters, into a busy corridor, and into the turbolift. He straightened his engineer's uniform: "Deck BLANK!"

When the turbolift car arrived at its destination. The doors opened and allowed familiar sounds reach Spencer's ears. The Matter/antimatter Reaction Chamber keeping a steady slow beat, along with the no so gently clamor of engineers speaking just above the never-ceasing chorus of instruments beeping and singing. The conductor of this symphony was a vixen who seemed to be oblivious of the music that she was conducting. Her eyes were focussed on the screen before her. The only sign that she was paying any attention to the world around her was the fact that her ears were twitching. On of those ears stopped to focus on something. Without looking up from her work, she shouted: "Locker 37C, Ensign!" A distant vice cursed under his breath and answered: "Thank you , Ma'am!" "You're welcome, Ensign! Carry on!"

Spencer chose this moment to speak up: "Lt. Jessica Simona. You're micro-managing!" The vixen stood back from her work and turned to face Spencer and reach out with her right arm to lean against the console she was working with: "Oh *really*?! Last time, you were telling me that I wasn't being helpful enough." "That's because we're talking about two different situations, Chief." Simona's eyes widened: "Just how are they different?" "Last time, two of your Ensigns asked for help and you hardly did anything to help them." "That's because they'll never learn if I just give them all of the answers." "Right! But just how are you helping them to learn if you give them next to no information to work with? If it weren't for me, they'd still be bumbling around, getting nothing done, or even breaking something!" Simona sighed: "And today I am micro-managing?" "That's right! Because this time, the Ensign in question didn't ask for help. He was confident he could find what he was looking for, on his own." "And what if he's just afraid to ask for help?" It'd make no difference. He'd have to learn to overcome his fear and start asking questions." "And what if it was an emergency or if he was about to make a disastrous mistake?" "But this wasn't the case. This was a minor thing. When it becomes a major thing, then you have every reason to interfere." Simona stared at him. He shrugged: "What? Do you think the Captain chose me to be your Assistant Chief simply because we come from the same home world?" "No, I chose you! And I chose you because I've seen your record. You've had a lot of civilian experience as a ship's engineer. My talents can only take me so far. I need someone with our experience. Now, if I'm a fool, then perhaps *you* are a poor choice for the job!" Spencer gave a belly laugh: "Good point, Chief! You win this round!"

Simona smiled and returned to her work: "To your post, Mr. Spencer." "I can't." Simona looked up, a bit annoyed: "Why not?" "Because you are micro-managing, again." "How?" "You are at my post, ma'am!" "You don't need to work at this console. You know that!" "That's not what I meant. I meant, how can I take over for you if you're still here, ma'am?" "You want me to leave in the middle of a Level 1 diagnostic?" Spencer's appearance was more laid-back than before: "Don't worry! We can handle it!" "I'd feel more comfortable if I could keep an eye on things." "What do you think the intercom, your communicator, and your tablet are for?" "Okay, I'll take a break, but not until after the Warp Reactor is shut down." "I don't blame you for that. And I'll summon you when we're ready to start her up again." Simona places her paw on Spencer's shoulder: "Thanks! Let's get started!"

Lieutenant Jessica Simona began going through the checklist: "Switch all electroplasma systems to auxiliary power! Prepare to shut down matter antimatter reactor! Shut her down! Close off antimatter and deuterium feeds! Get those containment fields in place! Lock out and tag out the feeds! Discharge electroplasma from the Plasma transfer conduit! Activate the EPS backwash retainer field! Let's get all remaining Lock Out/Tag Out's in place! That's it folks! I'm going off duty! If you have any questions or concerns--any at all, don't hesitate to notify me!" Simona gave one last look to Spencer. "Will you go already?!" Spencer replied waving his arms, trying to shoo her away. Simona nodded: "Cary on!" She strolled out of Main Engineering, with her tablet in paw.

She stopped to look at a power distribution display: “Hmmm!” She continued to make her way out of Main Engineering.

Lt. Simona arrived at a reinforced pair of double doors. They opened. She stepped into the shuttlebay to find a cheetah taur carrying a warp nacelle to a Type BLANK shuttlecraft, over his shoulder. He was wearing the uniform of an enlisted engineer. Lt. Simona took her communicator out of its holder: “Hey Chief!” She tossed the communicator to the Cheetah. The communicator almost seemed to be moving in slow motion as it floated its way across the shuttle bay. Simona sighted. Chief Petty Officer Smith spoke up: “You might be wondering--” “Why the gravity has been turned-down to less than one quarter in here?” Simona folded her arms over her chest: “Yah think that might be the reason I cam in here?” Smith lowered everything in his paws onto the deck, next to the shuttlecraft that he was working on. Simona leaned against the shuttlecraft, while she waited for an answer. Smith stood up and rubbed the back of his neck: “Well, ma’am, It’s just that it makes my work easier.” I only do it when I’m working my myself . . . “You mean like hefting around warp nacelles? Why not use a grav/antigrav clamp? “Tis’ not working.” Simona Check her tablet: “I don’t see any requests to have it repaired.” “That was because I hadn’t made any request, yet.” Simona silently listened as Smith continued, “Every time I put in a black request for a too repair or replace a tool, the dammed computer locks me out from the work that I’m doin’! I’m not gonna spend the next few days just sitting on my paws!” Next few days?” Simona was a bit stunned: “Chief! I can get that thing fixed in the next few hours! Heck! I could get you another, from one of the cargo, in the next few minutes!” “What about all the forms that have to be filled-out?” You let me take care of that.” Smith was puzzled: “You’re willing to handle the forms for me?” “Yes! Why not? We’re all on the same team, aren’t we?” “Well, yeah, but on the Potempkin--” “This isn’t the Potempkin, Chief!” Simona smiled and stared walking across the shuttlebay: “So where’s the malfunctioning clamp, over here?” Smith pointed: “Over there, by the Type 9!”

Simona picked up an object that was about the size of her arm and hefted it over her right shoulders: “Like I said, ‘this isn’t the Potemkin,’ Chief. Here we help each other out; regardless of rank.” Simona started heading towards the door: I’ll be right back with a clam from the cargo bay.” “Ur? Lieutenant?” “Yes Chief?” “I won’t be needing that clamp right-away, that is, if you will allow me to keep the gravity field at one quarter, for now, that is, for now. I’ll bring it back to normal when my sift is done! promise! Simona stopped and sighed. She turned to face the Chief: “Alright, but you can’t keep doing this every time you feel like it. The artificial gravity is tied in with the inertial dampeners. If the inertial dampeners mess-up, then someone in this room along with everything in it, is going to get knocked around, or worse.” “Understood, Lieutenant.” “And lock the door. Some unsuspecting crew-member could walk in here and get hurt.” Smith picked up the nacelle again: “Yes, Ma’am.” “Join me on your lunch break, Chief?” “I’ll think about that, Ma’am.” “They’re serving chunky salsa!” In jest, Chief Petty Officer Smith motioned like he was going to hurl the nacelle at his superior he shouted, “Will you get out of here?!!” Simona chuckled, “Okay Chief! I’m *going!*”

The door opened behind Simona: “One more thing!” “What is it now, Lieutenant?” “My communicator.” “The Chief grumbled and tossed the communicator back to Simona, who caught it: “See you at lunch, Chief.”

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Simona entered the galley with a spring in her step. Many of the officers sharing her shift had already gotten in line, by the time she had arrived. She found a seat near one of the windows and “reserved” it by placing: a communicator a tablet, and a malfunctioning grav/anitgrav clamp on the table. She then headed to the end of the line and grabbed a tray. She found herself standing behind a chakat. The markings of the chakat’s uniform indicated that shi was a science officer with the rank of Ensign.

The Ensign didn’t seem 100% comfortable about where shi was. It was obvious, to a keen observer, that this was hir first time serving on a starship. Shi needed guidance. Simona saw her duty: “Er, Ensign?” The chakat spun around to face the source of the voice. Hir heart stopped at the sight of the vixen and the full Lieutenant’s marks under her collar. Hir ears drooped and she started to walked to get to the back of the line. Simona stopped hir and raises her voice a little: “Whoa whoa whoa! Where are you going?” The chakat stood at attention and dug her fingers nervously into hir paw pads: “I must stand behind a higher-ranking officer, sir” Simona’s face went from that of puzzlement to having matronly concern: “What?” We can’t have our new crew-members starving to death! Where did you learn of such a regulation?” The chakat silently moved her head back to gesture to the male wolf, who was turning around to face the conversation. Simona wasted no time: “You will stand at attention when stand before me, mister!” The wolf took one glance at Simona’s rank before snapping to attention. He seemed more scared than the Ensign was. Simona got into the wolf’s face: “Name, rank and department, mister!” “Lieutenant Wapersh, of Security, sir!” Simona corrected, “*Full* rank and name. And you will call me ma’am!” “Lieutenant Junior Grade Coronaught Wapersh, ma’am!” Lt. Simona put her paws on her hips. “And just what regulation did you quote to the Ensign, *Junior Grade* Wapersh?” Wapersh fought to hide his distaste in the manor in which Simona had said his rank: “Ma’am, Starfleet General Conduct Code: Paragraph 13 sub-paragraph 1 sub-paragraph 18 sub-paragraph 21. All--” “That’s enough! Since you have proven that you are familiar with the regulation in question, should you be standing in line in front of me, Junior Grade, Wapersh?” “Yes, ma’am! I mean no, ma’am! I mean I’ll get in line behind you, ma’am!” “That’s better!” As Simona watched the Wolf walk past her, she sweetly waved the chakat over: “Come on, Ensign, you may stand in line in front of me.” The wolf glared at the vixen as the chakat walked past him. Simona argued, “I don’t see why you should be angry. You, of all people, should appreciate this. I’m only going along with your belief that rank is a privilege, not a responsibility.”

The wolf’s glare turned to a confident smirk. Simona was not yet aware of the Male felis that had entered the galley from the other door and was now standing over

her shoulder. The felis spoke: "Just what do you thing you are doing with one of my staff?" Simona jumped, aft first, but them she smiled and spuun around, answering, "Why Hello, Lt. Nieba! I didnt' hear you come in!" By theis time, all eyes in the galley were watching this little drama unfold. The felis seemed unmoved: "Enough with the idol-pleasantries, Lt. Simona, this ships Second Officer just asked you a question. You will answer it." Lt. Simona faced Lt. Nieba, stood more or less at attention, and carefully answered, "Yes, sir! I had just gotten in line and, in a gesture of goodwill, I struck up a conversation with the Ensign, here," she turned to the chakat, "I'm sorry, I never asked you your name, Ensign. What is it?" "Water-weaver, ma'am! Ensign Waterweaver." Lt Nieba cleared his throat . Simona snapped to at ease; "Yes! Well, I was attempting to speak to Ensign Waterweaver, again, as a token of good will, when shi proceeded to move behind me in line. When I asked hir why, shi told me that Lt. Wapersh had told hir that Starfleet regulations dictated that a lower-ranking officer must give up their place in line to a higher-ranking officer. I'm sure the Lieutenant didn't want to look like a hypocrite, so I allowed him to stand line behind me." "I see, but that doesn't explain why Ensign Waterweaver should wind-up standing in line before you." "Simple sir! I had not finished my conversation with Ensign Waterweaver. I would not have been able to complete my task effectively with the Lieutenant standing between us. Shi would have to be somewhere closer to me, such as being in front of me." "Do you think that leaves you in the clear, Lt. Simona?" "I suppose it does not, sir." "Damed right it doesn't! You still have yet to get these onlookers to mind their own business! Now hop to it, Lieutenant!" "Yes sir!" Simona clapped her paws and shouted, "You heard the man! As you were! Shows over!"

Lt. Nieba didn't seem completely satisfied: "Now, Lt. Simona! You will hand Lt Junior Grade Coronaught Wapersh over me, for discipline! That's an order!" Simona was beaming: "Yes sir! Lieutenant Junior Grade Coronaught Wapersh, you will report to Lt. Oka Nieba, for discipline!" Wapersh was stunned: "What?" "Did I say you could speak?" the felis slowly brought himself to close quarters, in front of the wolf, who was now trembling, as he stood at attention: "No sir!" Lt. Nieba paced back and fourth: "Now, what was that regulation, again?" "Sir! Starfleet General Conduct Code--" Lt Neiba cut-off Lt. J.G. Wapersh's recital and finished it for him: "--Conduct Code: Paragraph Mike, sub-paragraph Alpha, sub-paragraph Romeo, sub-paragraph Utah! Mike, Alpha Romeo Utah spells Maru! Meaning it's a made-up regulation, and I know who made it up: ME!" Lt. Nieba tapped a tiny emblem on his uniform: "Red Squad! Class of BLANK! I used it to on Red Squad pledges. By the time I became an officer, I had grown up and stopped playing games. You seem to still think you're still in the academy!"

Lt. Nieba continued with his brow-beating: "I just got you promoted from Ensign. Do you want this to be your first official act as J.G?" "No sir!" "Grow up or your next blunder it will be your last act as that rank! Now drop and give me fifty!"

Nieba continued to lecture Wapersh, saying things like: "We work as a team on this ship!" It was Waterweaver's turn to grab a tray. Shi turned to Simona: "I don't know what to get. Can you recommend anything, ma'am?" "Well, I'm having the ginger stir-fry, but you may want to get something else, if you insist on having meat." "No. That

actually sounds pretty good, ma'am." "Would you like to sit with me, Ensign? Also, would you mind not calling me ma'am while we're not on duty?" "Oh! Okay! What is your, first name, if I may ask." "It's Jessica. I grew up on earth."

The two of them got served and took their trays back to the table. Simona rushed to clear the table of her things and put set them aside. Waterweaver seemed a bit disoriented and asked, "What is that?" "Just a second! I tog it!" Simona said in a somewhat nervous tone. "No no! What is that?" Waterweaver corrected. Simona let herself relax: "Oh! It's a grav/antigrav--I mean, gravity-antigravity clamp. Chief Smith needs it fixed, "Simona paused, "so he can manipulate heavy objects, in the shuttlebay."

With the table cleared, the two of them attempted to put their trays down, simultaneously. Simona decided to be diplomatic: "Oh no! I insist that you be allowed to face the window!" "You may have the window, ma'am. I have seen my home world from orbit many times before." "You may feel the way you do now, but wait till you've been away for several months. You may even have hated living on your home world, but you're bound to get at least a little homesick, and wish that you had taken one last look, trust me." "Okay, Lieutenant, I shall accept your offer, thank you."

Ensign Waterweaver waited for Lt. Simona to take her seat, before she sat down. Simona grumble and stood up. Waterweaver watched her in puzzlement as Simona walked to the counter and came back with two six-inch long sticks that tapered to points at the end. Waterweaver was even more puzzled: "What are those?" "They are called chop-sticks. It's a tradition that came from an ancient earth culture. The people of that culture developed the use of chopsticks instead of forks. Waterweaver was fascinated: "Well, I've learned to use a fork. Why don't I give *chalk?* sticks a try?" Simona started to get up, again: "That's *chop* sticks, and sure. I'll be right back." "With my *chop* sticks?" Simona gave Waterweaver a sweet smile: "Indeed!"

Simona took yet another trip to the counter and returned with Waterweaver's first pair of chopsticks. Simona took her seat and began to give Waterweaver her first lesson: "There, now present your paw open, like this. You want to press the fist chopstick between the tip of your ring finger and the joint in your thumb." Simona looked up and gently corrected her student: "No no. Where it bends at the knuckle, see! Yeah, that's it! Now you hold the second chopstick between your thumb and other two fingers; just like holdign a stylus. That looks right. Now try picking something up!" They both to a bite of their meals. Waterweaver picked up a grain of rice with her chopsticks, and held it between them: "It's going to take forever if I'm going to eat these this way." Simona chuckled, "I was just about to get to that! Let me show you how to eat the rice!" She demonstrated: "You see! You kinda scoop it up, like this. It helps if the rice is sticky." Waterweaver giggled as she lifted a clump of rice to her mouth, and ate it.

One of the most beautiful sights to be seen from orbit above BLANK stated to appear through the window, but Watereweaver wasn't paying much attention to that. Shi couldn't keep her eyes off of the face of the vixen that she had just met.

The Lieutenant may have had similar feelings for the Ensign, but her eyes had shifted to the Chief of Security. After disciplining and dismissing Lt. Wapersh, Lt. Nieba had taken a seat, without grabbing any food. He kept his eyes on the doorways. Simona was about to see why.

One pair of doors slid open to reveal a chakat who was wearing the uniform of the Chief Medical Officer and was decorated with the garb of a Shaman. As she stepped through the doorway, her eyes lit up. She waved energetically and bounded her way to Lt. Nieba, who had risen to his feet, at the sight of her. They embraced each other with great enthusiasm.

"I don't get what she sees in him," Simona said just before taking in a mouthful of food. All Waterweaver could say was, "Who?" Simona pointed with her chopsticks and raced to swallow her food, before she spoke: "Oka and Two-Spirit. I don't know what such a peace-loving dedicated follower of the Hippocratic Oath would see in that thug." "What do you mean?" "Huh?" "I mean, what has Lt. Nieba done that qualifies him to be called a thug? All I know is that he stood up for me when I was getting picked on. In fact, after you, he's been the kindest person I have met, onboard this ship, so far." Simona went back to eating as she thought about what the Ensign has said. She tried to remember the number of times that Oka had acted like a thug.

I don't recall him doing anything specific, but through all of my years at the academy, those security types were bullying their fellow students. Simona paused before continuing: "Ah! Now I remember! Two-Spirit and I were standing in line at a concert. "Like you and I were standing in line a moment ago?" Waterweaver butted in. Simona grumbled. Waterweaver blushed and apologized, "Oh! Sorry! Please continue!" Simona took a deep breath and continued, "So, we were standing in line for a concert when," Simona pointed over to Oka, as she spoke, "that felis comes rushing in and 'rescues' us from a group of freshmen that were standing before us." "I think it's sweet! Besides, didn't you just come to my rescue?" "That was different! You were being bullied! I admit that the group of Freshmen were annoying, but it wasn't anything Two-Spirit and I couldn't handle, ourselves. And he used that same stupid 'Maru; regulation on them!" "I still think it was sweet!" "Apparently, so did Two-Spirit, because she let him sit with us at the concert! After that, there were very few times that I could spend with Two-Spirit, without him tagging along. It's true that he's been nice to me; even a little too nice! Even now, he still flirts with me, on occasion!" Simona looked down to see Waterweaver's paw touching hers. Her eyes widened.

"Main Engineering to Lt. Simona! Lt. Simona, please respond!"