

FROM THE AVENGER LOGS...

A VISIT TO THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES CHIEF'S OFFICE

By Rahadyan T. Sastrowardoyo

[The following is a partial transcript from the *Avenger's* Flight Recorder; the chrono tag on the entry reads 0913 hrs, stardate 9305.31.]

Good morning! I'm Commander Sastrowardoyo. You must be Ensign Caitlin Rutherford. Sorry I wasn't around when you and the others came on board—you came in during Delta Shift, when I was asleep. I guess you've had your cabin assignment and your medical appointment with Dr. Fillmore scheduled, right? Great!

Well, welcome to the *Avenger* and to the Sciences Division. You'll get to meet Commander DiMaio, our Chief Science Officer, sometime later today—she's up on the main bridge until 1400. I'm sure you two will get along. I have to admit I'm biased, but I think she's one of the best division chiefs on *Avenger*.

Let's see, your file is...right here? No. Hmm. You'll have to forgive the appearance of my desk, it's not usually this messy. I know where everything is at all times, I assure you. Hmmm. Here's that new project-planning software I'm supposed to test for Lieutenant Ciufu...

Ah, here we are. I see your major at the Academy was mathematics. Terrific! We haven't had a mathematics specialist in a couple of months, not since Lieutenant Michaelsen transferred to the *Blackheart*. Looks like you have an exemplary record, good class average, test scores well above average... Hm. 14th in a class of 800. Very respectable. `Course, you wouldn't be here if you weren't the cream of the crop.

Where are my manners? Can I get you a cup of coffee or something else? We have GREAT coffee here on the *Avenger*. Over here in the corner is a stasis locker. Yeah, this is a prototype—usually they don't make them this small; used to be a waste of energy to maintain a stasis field smaller than 360 cubic meters—it was made up by one of the *Avenger's* kid geniuses down in Engineering. This is really energy efficient—not nearly as much as one of the Slaver Empire stasis boxes, but definitely state-of-the-art for Star Fleet. Anyway, Commander DiMaio drew up the specs a few months ago, one of Padovan's people put it together, and now the CSO and all of us Science Department Chiefs have one. In some ways, coffee's more important than dillithium or the EPS power taps in Sciences. I guess you could say we're all caffeine-based life forms.

Yeah, I have all different kinds of coffee here, and a couple of teas. My favorite's the Altairian stuff; it tastes like Jamaican blue mountain flavored with anisette. Want some? Sure, let me just set up the coffeemaker here. We don't like to use the replicator for coffee, at least not most of us here in Sciences. It doesn't taste as good. Coffee'll be ready in a minute.

Let's see. I see you have a ship's orientation session scheduled for this afternoon, and a meeting with Commander DiMaio at 1700. Your meetings with Second Officer Fillmore and First Officer Johnson won't be until tomorrow. Hm. I don't have regular office hours; I used to have an open door from 1400-1600 on Tuesdays, but it seems to work out better if people just make appointments. My normal duty shift is gamma, 2000-0200, but I've been working alpha the past couple of weeks to better coordinate some inter-departmental projects.

If you need to see me, you can just make an appointment with Ensign Ysanwe, s/he's the Sulamid yeoman that was sitting at the reception desk? We only need one yeoman in Sciences; Ysanwe's octo-cameral brain manages to do the work of up to eight humanoid brains. Or you can send me a memo via the ship's BBS.

On Friday afternoons, from 1300 to at least 1430 (sometimes they go to 1600), Physical Sciences has a weekly meeting of all personnel assigned to that department. Basically I'd like to keep in touch with my people and see how they're doing. Commander DiMaio almost always shows up for these, since she was our Chief of Physical Sciences for a number of years. The other Sciences departments have their meeting scheduled on different days.

Ah, here's the coffee. Can I get you milk, cream, half-and-half, orzata maybe? Brandy doesn't go well with the Altairian, otherwise I'd offer it to you. Milk and sugar? Sure. Great stuff, isn't it?

Oh, I should mention that the departmental meetings are for professional concerns only. If for some reason you have a personal problem, please come see me. And if there's a problem either with me or another officer, I'd rather you attempt to solve those problems with me FIRST, okay? And you know the chain of command: you can see Ms. DiMaio if you have a problem with me; if you're not satisfied, then you should see Commander Johnson—you probably met him when you came aboard? After that's the CO, the Big Kahuna, Vice Admiral Rosenzweig. Hopefully things won't get that far.

We don't have a dedicated mathematics lab here on *Avenger*. You can use either the terminal in your quarters or one of the Sciences briefing rooms here on Deck 7. Okay? Relax, I know this is your first tour of duty. I'm sure you'll do fine. I'm NOT an ogre—I am fair. Tough, but fair.

Anything else? I noticed your eyes kept drifting to the little plaque in back of my chair. It's just a *tchatchke* I was given when I was Alien Contact Officer on the *Tereshkova*. Hand-carved Aldebaranian blackwood. "Gravity: it's not just a good idea—it's the LAW!" Yeah, I know it's kinda corny.

Did you really expect *Avenger* Sciences to be that staid? We might be the 7th Fleet flagship, but we know how to have fun here! Here in back of my desk is a serial holo that doubles as a demonstration screen, an electronic blackboard if you will. I have it rigged to display posters of different musical performers from Terran history: that's Jimi Hendrix at Monterey in, oh, 1967. I also have Springsteen playing Madison Square Garden, The Beatles at the Hollywood Bowl, Clapton at Shea Stadium in 1992, Dylan at Budokan around 1978, Bonner the Stochastic at the Firewall on Bellatrix V-a in 2043, all the great ones...

These walls, by the way, are transparent aluminum. Right now, they're set on "opaque", but their default setting is full transparent. Commander DiMaio likes to keep her eye on all of us.

Over here is my rack of musical instruments, mostly different Terran-style guitars, acoustic and electric. I play music to relax, or when I'm working out a thought-experiment, or reading. Oh, and that's not a jukebox; that's a stand-alone Daystrom J-2A duotronic polyprocessor in a 1994 Wurlitzer CD jukebox exterior. It's separate from the ship's mainframe, just in case... Fortunately I haven't had to use it. Not yet.

And yeah, that's a real player piano, another item from my 20th-century collection. This is a model from the 1920s or so, modified so it can play not just the original paper rolls, but those clunky analog and digital cassettes from the late 20th--and pretty much every Terran and Federation media format of the past three hundred years, including the new isolinear optical chips.

How long has it been since you've seen real books? I realize datachips and disks and computer carts are a lot more convenient, and I couldn't do my job without those things, but nothing really compares to the heft and feel of a REAL book, of turning real pages. They're all the standard references we use here in Physical Sciences, plus some first editions of classic works in the field: Richter, Masters, Einstein, Hawking, Jeffries, Danylkiw, Abramson, Feynman, Cochrane, etc. I use them about as often as I use the interactive/on-line versions in the ship's library.

Over here by the door is a Kdatlyno touch-sculpture. I'm sorry I can't pronounce the sculptor's name; it's a gift from my best friend, for my last promotion.

We have a regular schedule of lectures, special events, and other activities here on *Avenger*. The list is updated daily and sent via e-mail to all personal terminals and datapadds. And if you'd like to do a lecture yourself, please see me to schedule it. The more the merrier.

Well, that's the quarter-credit tour. Oh, I just remembered. Saturday evening, starting around 1930, Sciences has Main Recreation on Deck 5 reserved for our quarterly mixer. It's just another way for all of us to keep in touch, and get to know people from outside our own specialties. The mixers are really a lot of fun. You may get to meet the other Sciences department chiefs in the meantime, but you'll definitely meet them Saturday. We limit attendance to Sciences for the first hour, then the chiefs of other divisions are allowed to drop by. You can probably count on the CO and XO and some other senior

officers to be there, too. Don't worry, though, it's pretty informal.

Hey, thanks for stopping by. Again, I'm sure you'll do fine. No, I'm sure you'll have a great tour of duty here on *Avenger*. I really look forward to working with you. See you around.

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