

INT. SHIP'S BRIDGE

Lieutenant Commander Cassandra, Cassie, Hayle (30) is sat in the captain's chair, gripping the sides as her ship is thrown around.

We join during a battle for which our hero's ship is obviously outmatched.

Explosions rock the bridge.

CASSIE

Reroute power from main engines, boost power to the shields.

EXT. SPACE

The other ship is firing phasers at the Federation ship and dodging almost every return blast.

INT. SHIP'S BRIDGE

The bridge is rocked by blasts from the mystery assailant

ENGINEERING CREW MEMBER

I'm trying, Captain, but I can't get the matrix to respond - it's jammed.

CASSIE

Get it done, Lieutenant.

ENGINEERING CREW MEMBER

Aye, Captain. If I can just reroute the...

Around them control panels explode and crew are thrown back, visibly wounded

CASSIE

Damnit.

She rushes over and pushes the engineering crew member out of the way, vigorously jabbing at the control surface.

It stubbornly refuses to cooperate. A red message, "JAMMED", flashes on the screen.

CASSIE

What's wrong with this thing?!

EXT. SPACE

The mystery assailant fires a volley of phasers at our hero's ship, the shields flicker and then falter.

From the enemy ship an energy build up sound can be heard and then two bright flashes of light as photon torpedoes are fired.

They streak over to Cassie's ship and, with no shields, it's a sure kill. They rip through the hull and the ship starts to explode.

INT. SHIP'S BRIDGE

We watch as Cassie, still standing at the engineering console, is surround in explosions and then a brilliant white light...

Which fades to reveal Cassie still standing in the same position, the recognisable lines of a holodeck in the background.

JESSICA HAYLE (O.S)

That's the third time you've failed the scenario, Cassie.

Cassie turns and we see a woman dressed in a Starfleet uniform, Jessica Hayle (50) - although, curiously, it is an older style uniform with no rank identifiers.

JESSICA

(cont)

Each time at exactly the same moment.

CASSIE

(angry)

I don't understand what this is meant to teach me. If I can't reroute the power then we lose the shields and then the ship.

Jessica smiles, seeing something Cassie obviously doesn't.

JESSICA

What was your training at the Academy, Cas.

CASSIE

You know that. Transwarp theory. What's that got to do with anything?

JESSICA

You just said "If I can't reroute the power". Do you have any training on power distribution systems?

CASSIE

Not exactly...

Suddenly the penny drops. Cassie nods.

CASSIE

I think I understand. Each time I rush to help the engineer. But he's trained in power distribution systems, I'm not.

I should stay in command and trust that my crew can do their jobs.

Jessica smiles widely and puts her hand on Cassie's shoulder

JESSICA

A good captain knows that they can't do everything... be everywhere. There are some things you have to just trust that your crew can do.

CASSIE

Thanks, mom.

They briefly hug.

ADMIRAL JACK POPE (O.S)

(Over communicator badge)

Admiral Pope to Lieutenant Commander Hayle

Cassie taps her communicator

CASSIE

Go ahead, Admiral.

JACK

Report to my office, Cassandra.

CASSIE

Acknowledged.

Cassie turns to her mother.

CASSIE

See you later, mom.

JESSICA

I hope it won't be too long, I get so bored.

They both quickly embrace again and Cassie walks away, towards and past the camera.

We stay looking at Jessica as we hear the sound of doors opening and closing.

CASSIE (O.S)

Computer, end program.

The lights dim on the holodeck as the program shuts down. Jessica waves slightly before she, too, flickers like the hologram she is, and fades away.

EXT. STARFLEET ACADEMY - DAY

Short establishing shot of a very busy, bright and prosperous Starfleet Academy.

INT. ADMIRAL POPE'S OFFICE

POPE

The Salvation is ready for it's maiden voyage, Cassandra.

CASSIE

I'd heard. The last simulation went well?

POPE

No issues found.

(pause)

All within operational parameters.

CASSIE

And that's management speak for...?

POPE

Look, Cassie. This is an experimental drive - the Reese-Montgomery propulsion system has never been tested on a real ship.

All simulations have been successful, the device has been powered and charged without incident...

But - a maiden voyage is never without risk.

CASSIE

I understand that, I just wanted to see where I stood.

POPE

Where *you* stood?

CASSIE

Well, you didn't call me in here to tell me something I already knew.

Everyone can't stop talking about how the brave Captain Montgomery's taking the USS Salvation to the edge of the galaxy and back...

(pause)

You obviously want me to join the crew.

POPE

I don't want you to join it, Cas. I want you to captain the Salvation.

CASSIE

But, Captain Montgomery...

POPE

Captain Montgomery cannot go, Cassie. For all our medical advances there's one thing we can't stop, old age. His mind is sharp, but his body is not up to the rigors of a shakedown cruise.

CASSIE

Why me? I've never captained a real ship before.

POPE

You have.

Cassie tries to speak but the Admiral raises his hand.

POPE

(cont)

I know that was only back to Earth after your captain fell ill, but you've still been in command of a star ship.

Montgomery is unable to captain the Salvation and so you're the only choice we have.

You were top in your class on Transwarp drives and the only available command officer we have that's not assigned to a ship.

You will take the Salvation and pilot her outside the solar system.

From there you will engage the Reese-Montgomery drive and take her as far as you can. Then ... turn around and come back.

Pope smiles at an obviously shocked Cassie

POPE

(cont)

I know it's a lot to take in, but the maiden voyage is scheduled for tomorrow afternoon, San Francisco time, and we need you there.

CASSIE

One request, sir.

Pope inclines his head

CASSIE

I have a private holodeck program... A training course of sorts. I would like that to be uploaded to the Salvation's main memory banks.

POPE

Consider it done. Good luck, Captain Hayle.

CROSS FADE TO:

EXT. SPACE

A shuttlecraft floats through space, through the window we see Cassie and a man.

The man, Lt Cdr Christopher Reese (35, English), is piloting.

As the shuttlecraft moves we see the glimpse of a larger, very impressive, ship behind it.

INT. SHUTTLECRAFT

REESE
Impressive, isn't she.

Cassie moves to get a better look out of the shuttlecraft's window.

CASSIE
(in awe)
The word I would use is amazing.

REESE
Bloody big, that's what I'd use. Bigger than any other ship Starfleet has made.

(pause)
Bigger than some space stations.

CASSIE
(distracted by the colossus)
Really?

REESE
Oh, yes. She's an old experimental ship from the Dominion wars that never saw action.

CASSIE
(still distracted, staring at the ship)
You seem to know a lot about it for a pilot.

REESE
(without responding to the implied question)
The Dominion were pumelling us with energy weapons that ripped through our shields, we realised that the only ships that survived were ones with ablative armour, like the USS Defiant.

CASSIE
(A little more interested)
But you can't retrofit ablative armour to the large ships, like Galaxy and Excelsior classes.

REESE
No, so work started on this beauty. A large behemoth of a ship - little more than ablative armour itself.

On the inside it was almost totally hollow, but with launch tubes for shuttle-sized fighters, and larger, delta flyer class ships - all to be equipped with ablative armour.

Reese started doing hand motions with both hands, imitating fighters. Obviously excited by his re-telling.

REESE

They could come screaming out of the Salvation to attack The Dominion, doing as much damage as they could.

Then retreat into the safety of their hangers while the larger ship prepared to warp away.

He claps his hands with finality and "whooshed" a warp noise to end his story.

CASSIE

But we defeated The Dominion anyway.

REESE

Yes, and so the ship was mothballed, almost totally complete but totally useless with the peace of today.

Captain Montgomery found it in some shipyard around Alpha Centauri, towed it back here and installed the drive...

It needs all that space, the drive. It's just a prototype, you see.

We're coming to the docking port now, prepare for departure, Captain.

CASSIE

"Lieutenant Commander", I'm not on my ship yet.

REESE

In that case - prepare for departure, *Lieutenant Commander*.

INT. USS SALVATION'S DOCKING PORT

The shuttlecraft enters and lands. Waiting for the shuttlecraft is, most of, the senior crew.

The shuttlecraft door opens and Cassie steps forward and out.

CASSIE

Thank you, pilot. You're dismissed.

Reese smiles and follows Cassie through the doorway.

Cassie looks confused and is about to say something before she's interrupted by Commander Sa'ar (Klingon, Female)

SA'AR

Welcome Captain. I am Commander Sa'ar of the house of Odas, your first officer.

Let me introduce the rest of your senior staff.

First Lieutenant XXXX, Science officier
Lieutenant Commander XXXX, Chief of

security
Doctor XXXX, Medical
Ensign XXXX, Ops

CASSIE
(in "Captain mode")
Greeting, everyone. I can't tell you how
excited I am for this voyage. I'm sure
you will all exceed my expectations.

Tell me, where is my Chief Engineer,
hidden up some Jefferies tube no doubt?

Sa'ar looks shocked and glances behind Cassie.

Reese steps around Cassie and stands next to Sa'ar, a big smile
on his face.

REESE
Chief Engineer, Lieutenant Commander
Christopher James Reese.

Reese offered a smart salut with just the slightest hint of
mockery.

REESE
(cont)
Reporting for duty, *Captain*.

Cassie looks annoyed at being taken for a fool but after a
moment, sees the joke.

A small, almost imperceptable, smile crosses her face before
her composure is back.

CASSIE
I'll speak to you later, Lieutenant.

Make a fool of me again and I'll flush you
out of the nearest airlock.

Reese is still smiling like that would be the most wonderful
experience of his life.

REESE
Yes, sir.

Cassie turns to Sa'ar.

CASSIE
Show me my bridge please, Commander.
Everyone else... carry on.

INT. USS SALVATION BRIDGE

The "whoosh" of a turbo-lift door opening reveals Cassie and
Sa'ar.