

Deck Life Edit – Pauline Yates

According to her(who? Give a name to engage the reader) body clock it was four in the morning. Earth was a fragment of light dotting the star-filled ports of the ship she was on. It was, to her, that time of day when you analyzed previous events, digested them and moved on. It was also a time to brood.

Phillips(who is Phillips? What's is relationship to the main character who's name we don't yet know) had finished his shift so she(name)(Everytime you change names, you need to open with hename of the character so we know who the sentence refers to) didn't have to face his snide remarks which bordered on harassment. She felt relieved, she didn't have to deal with him. It was one bonus for getting out of bed, she thought. Jerry(who is he? What's there relationship) was another matter. She had known him for as long as she could remember. He never said a bad word to anyone but he had a mean temper when provoked. She only saw once what he could do in his darkest moods. She didn't need a second performance.

Kira(Is this our main character? If so, insert her name into the first sentence) got up. She pondered on the thought of calling in sick and having the day to herself. She slowed to a snail-like pace, as she showered, dressed and ate. If only for real coffee and milk, she thought, as she ate her rationed cardboard breakfast and drank her artificial beverage. She(we know which character we're dealing with), trudged to the main deck, passing only a few of the crew on the way. Those who did notice her, avoided her like the plague. She smiled wanly as the other crew passed (too many uses of the word passed – choose another word) her without a second glance, brooding inwardly at the rumor mill(What rumour mill?). Facts were misconstrued, people blamed or accused(choose one as both mean the same), crimes lay down on the permanent record of every crew member's brain. Their problem, she

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thought. (Plot point – you have a rumour, but nowhere in the opening suggested a rumour or a problem. If the rumour is the problem, it needs to go in the opening paragraph)

She entered the bridge. The bustling hive of activity stopped. Everyone stared at her. She felt uncomfortable. (don't tell me she felt uncomfortable, show how she felt uncomfortable)

Someone shuffled. A cough. The beeps of incoming and outgoing transmissions were all that could be heard. The captain walked in from his ready room.

'Now is not the time or place.' He looked around the deck. 'Get back to work. We have a schedule to keep. Kira, my office, if you please.' The captain turned and walked into his ready room.

No one in their right mind disobeyed the captain. (Was someone going to disobey the captain? Presumptuous. Need an action first). His voice was like a decoy to lure you in for the kill. At

this moment Kira knew what a fish felt like. (What does a fish feel like?). With the Captain, you did as you were told or you faced the consequences. All eyes on her, she trudged to his

office. Why did the captain's ready room have to be across the bridge? Feeling the executioners' noose tighten around her neck, she raised her hand, but the door opened before she could knock.

Hearing snickers, she cringed inwardly as the captain said enter. She took a deep breath.

The captain was seated at his desk, shuffling information tablets from one tray to the next. He motioned her to take a seat, then went back to his tablet shuffling. Sitting, Kira watched. The flurry of activity in the office was as great as it was on the bridge.

She didn't notice the captain watching her as she stared at the overflowing trays on his desk.

She was day dreaming about an erotic fantasy that took place in a ready room aboard an ocean going ship in the earlier century, far away from the tablets and imposing man behind the desk. She had read it as a girl not old enough to know the whole truth about sex. (I'd

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rework this whole section. It reads too long and is confusing) The captain cleared his throat,
smiling bemusedly at her. (She's sitting)

'I'm sorry about the display on the deck, Kira. My authority has been compromised on a
minor scale, but enough to rattle the crew in their confidence regarding my decisions.

Personally, this is all together such a minor incident you shouldn't be here cluttering up my
room.' Kira grimaced. She felt like a million eyes were on her, crawling into every tiny
orifice that they could find. This is a minor incident, she thought. I would hate to hear his
definition of major. She moved in her chair under the captain's unrelenting stare.

'For formality sake, and the need to report the incident to the Arch High General, in your
own words, what happened the day of the incident?' She cleared her throat. 'I guess I should
start at the beginning. It(what started?) started as per usual. I was at my workstation when I
was asked by a junior to assist with a complex jump algorithm for our routine incursion into
the 'Deep'.'

'Could you explain every term please as the Arch High General may not understand our
interstellar slang,' the captain said. Kira looked at him hard. He shrugged and gestured for her
to continue.

'The 'Deep' is the term we use for usage of a wormhole to transport the ship faster than if we
used regular travel,' she said.

'The work I was doing was not considered important to not assist with the enquiry or to
the(confusing, can you reword this?) current mission so I left my panel on 'auto' so it could
continue with its current task.' The captain (gave her a look, raised his eyebrow?) but Kira
was not going to explain every lexical idiosyncrasy that spacers use.

'My task for my work period was to run a simulated holographic response to a hostage crisis
on the President's ship. This is regularly run to adjust the simulation to include recent
criminals and armament specifications that have been recently discovered on the black

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market. It's a routine task, one which is run by the staff of the lower deck at least once a trimester. Little did I know that in the background of lower deck, the discouraged game of anti-grav paper ball was going on.' She cleared her throat. She was annoyed she'd been called away to help a junior and missed out on the fun of paper ball, but her annoyance turned to relief. The officers who were playing anti-grav paper ball were disciplined and demoted.

'What happened next should not have happened to this crew or to this ship. The paper ball hit the panel that I had on 'auto' and the simulation began to execute. It was a perfectly timed shot to activate the panel. Even though it is common to have a rostered list drawn up as to whom is working at what panel and on what project, no one had the thought to view it, until now.' She was ashamed at her own lack of discipline but the captain begged her to continue, though he looked rather bored at the process.

'The tweaks I made to the simulation worked,' she said. 'The Holo Sims, holographic simulations, entered the lower deck through a side entrance triggering all the weight and optical sensors as though the Sims were organic in nature. The gunners and grunts of the small group all looked menacing with familiar facial structures of wanted criminals. The ringleader of the group looked similar to a wanted criminal in this region. I had no idea though that the crew of lower deck would react in the way that they did.' She shifted uncomfortably as the scene unfolded in her mind.

'Jerry Tenshu, the chief gunner on the lower deck, screamed and attempted to run out a side entrance, for only reasons he knows. He was stunned by a holosim grunt. Panic ensued as everyone assumed that Jerry was dead and not incapacitated.' She winced at the thought of what Jerry was going to say to her when he came fully around. Jerry hit a panel and the injury sustained had left him in sick bay. (unclear – was he injured from falling or injured from being stunned?)

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'Phillips Flitley radioed for urgent assistance from the top deck and then tried to contact you by your personal com-link before being incapacitated himself.'

'She had no love for Phillips who bought his rank through his wealth rather than education, discipline and motivation. She thought of Phillips Flitley as a power hungry, social leech.'

'Three of the lower deck juniors fainted over their panels, adding to the havoc as their simulations joined the activated holosims. One junior has been suspended because of

suspected alternative sexual preferences, alien in nature.'

She blushed. The captain looked embarrassed.

'Two of the team leaders, Peter Owens and Yohanna Nefra, fired shots towards the holosims which only caused severe damage to the panels behind them. The emergency shutdown

mechanism for the outer lower deck doors was activated. This led to the biocontrol's being rendered offline and the oxygen scrubbers ceased to function on the deck. Thankfully, we were only locked out for a short period of time so carbon dioxide poisoning was not an issue.

Simple protocol had been abandoned at this stage. If the team leaders asked the holosims their rank and serial number, the holosims would have reacted by executing their shutdown protocol. This is a common and quick method of shutdown if the holosims are accidentally activated. It is a feature that has been in place for this reason. However, most people

disregard this 'last resort' shutdown because of the training manner the holosims create. The shots passed through the holosims, causing the panel damage which made the team leaders realize that the President Hostage simulation had been activated.'

'Instead of causing relief, this information caused more panic as the panel that the holosims could be shut down from had been damaged and rerouting was impossible without the right parts which were down the hall behind the doors which were now locked down due to the shots fired.'

She took a deep breath. She needed a drink. Not simulated. Real.

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'I heard the commotion and shots fired from the other room. The junior and myself ran in to see this disaster unfolding. I saw that the team leaders were trying to execute shutdown protocol for the simulation but were having no success. The sims were firing, at anything that moved. I stood still and screamed out the emergency shutdown protocol. The simulation shutdown immediately. I grabbed the headset from the incapacitated Flitley and begged stand down by the crew on top deck. I explained, that the hostage simulation had been activated, and it was a false alarm. I asked for a cleanup crew and maintenance, also the ships councilor, since some of the crew on lower deck were bordering hysterical. She paused, bowing her head.

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'The comms person refused my orders. I assumed she thought I was one of the pirates and considered my requests as an endangerment to the crew. She said that armored personnel will arrive, shortly in your vicinity. The only help I needed was for someone to unlock the door so the damaged panels could be fixed, and the crew counseled. This is my explanation.'

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(Another pause here but to do with Kira so we know it's her that continues to speak)

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'Myself and the junior waited at her panel for the grunts to unlock the door. The other crew were beginning to revive and look around wondering what had happened. The team leaders were discussing something hurriedly in the corner of lower deck. Groans could be heard from corners of the room. The grunts opened the doors. The team leaders talked to the grunts. I was stood down from my post and the rest has been logged.' Kira stopped talking.

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The captain took a breath. He paced over to the desk and stopped the recording (He's sitting, so he needs to stand. I took out the click of the recorder above, but it's returned here. If it's no problem that Kira sees the recorder, then have it on the captains desk where it can be seen.

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Unless it's essential to hide the recorder, don't waste the words) He sat down (wasn't he already sitting??) and looked at Kira. She felt like, hot needles poked into her skull at the way

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in which the captain looked at her. He took be specific(a bottle?) out of the cupboard and poured the contents or liquid into two glasses. He pushed one towards Kira. She drank without asking what the drink was but it burned down her throat to her stomach. She coughed and spluttered.

‘You could have warned me it was real.’ she said through tears. The captain laughed. ‘What and not have the fun of watching your reaction?’

Kira smiled. The alcohol made her to relax.

‘That was your version of events?’ the captain said in all seriousness. His smile turned predatory.

‘Yes’ said Kira. The captain got up and walked to where she sat. (isn’t there a desk between them? He’d have to walk around the desk) He bent over her. (awkward – he leaned over her shoulder?)

‘We can’t have free thinkers from the lower ranks now can we.’ His voice was low and threatening. With a hand gesture, he walked away from her chair.

(Kirra felt uncomfortable, she’d be confused here as to the captains actions and his words.

Until she sees the grunts) The grunts who came in through a concealed side entrance were unknown to her. They held her down in the chair. She tried to wrestle free but knew that the expending of energy was fruitless.

‘Until we dock at the next space port, you are hereby demoted to sub junior assigned to Phillips for menial tasks as befitting your rank. I don’t want authority of your peers overruled.... You are dismissed....’

Kira’s s scream woke the other shift workers, who abused her for disturbing their sleep.

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Great first draft. Here's some notes to consider:

Rumour was mentioned but there appears to be no rumour, but actually facts that played out. And incident happened, and there was an explanation to why it happened. This is not rumour.

In the opening paragraph, there's nothing about the character to engage the reader. Who is the character, and by what name, what is the problem, what is at stake? What will happen if a solution to the problem isn't found? Give the reader something to root for.

I haven't bothered with paragraphs, or word count until a next draft, as much would be rewritten.

You could take out the needed space terminology explanation. If this is an official report, it would be assumed that the report will be understood by someone at a higher level. Then you could slice back the explanation parts to cut some words.

The captain's response at the end is confusing. I know this is only a dream, but there's nothing to indicate she's in the wrong. Is he up to no good? Does he want a patsy? Unclear as to his motives. And also unclear as to her worst fears. Nothing about this has been said. That would tie into the opening set up and thus explain the ending better.

It would also be great if there was some indication of how she's normally treated by her co-workers, so we can see the change in attitude.