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ENGAGE!

THE STAR TREK FAMILY MAGAZINE



**THE
FIRST OFFICERS**

ENGAGE!

ISSUE 11 — NOVEMBER 2025

Editor's Log

Exploring the Final Frontier as Fans



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A Starfleet ship is only as good as its crew. Arguably one of the most important positions aboard the ship, aside from its captain, is the First Officer.

Standing as a bastion of support whilst simultaneously acting as the sounding board, and sometimes conscience, for a commanding officer is hard enough. The First Officer's more important duty, I would argue, is to the crew serving below him or her. All Department Heads must report to them, and the safety and wellbeing of all crew fall squarely within the wheelhouse of the First Officer.

No other role aboard the ship bears more weight and responsibility than the First Officer. The captain must rely on him for strength, guidance, counsel, encouragement and finally, to carry out his or her orders. In addition, the First Officer is accountable for making sure that the entire crew is trained properly and ready to carry out their assignments at a moment's notice.

On the flip side, the First Officer is tasked with making sure everyone from the captain on down to the most junior ensign, enlisted man or civilian family member are kept safe and healthy.

We have seen so many First Officers now in *Star Trek* — from Spock's blunt assessment of any situation to Ransom's preoccupation with the weight room. From Riker's blind devotion for serving Picard to T'pol often impeding Archer's ambitions (largely due to her experience with the Vulcan service). It takes all kinds — but the First Officer's part is such an important one, we decided to dedicate this issue to them.

— Mark Sickle
Founder & Host
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ENGAGE!

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IS NUMBER ONE A PRIME NUMBER?

STEPHEN MIRKIN

By definition, the number one is not a prime number. Yet, in the *Star Trek* universe, it is. When I say it is, it refers to the prime need for a Number One. Who is the one who is there to question the captain's orders? Who is the one to reassure the crew that everything is going to be OK? Who is the one to step in if the captain is captured, crazed or, in the worst case, killed? Who is the one to ensure that a calm, cool person is ready, willing and able to provide for the survival of the crew and ship? It must be the prime example of a person worthy of being Number One.

In the history of *Star Trek*, there have been a number of persons who have filled the position of Number One. Going back to the original *Star Trek* series and the first pilot episode entitled "The Cage," the Number One was a woman. She was a woman without a name other than "Number One." What is significant is that it was 1965, a year before NOW, the National Organization for Women, was founded. Gene Roddenberry had the forethought to have a woman as second in command of the *Enterprise* over what would have been the norm, having a man in that position. When Capt. Pike is taken by the Talosians, who is there to take command and use all the power of the *Enterprise* to free him? When she is also captured by the Talosians, she is willing to give her life to prevent herself from being enslaved. Her actions cause the Talosians to free the crew, as we were too savage a race to use for their plans.

In the end, as we all know, the pilot was redone into the form

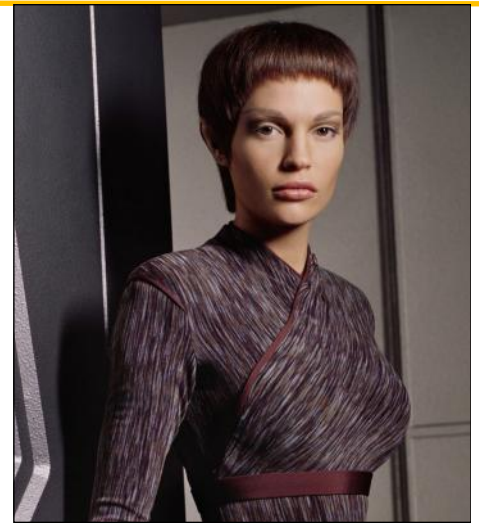
that would last with Mr. Spock as the Number One. Going forward, males would be the choice of a Number One in subsequent series until *Enterprise* appeared on TV.

Since this month's issue of *ENGAGE!* is about the First Officers, or Number Ones, I would like to make my case as to why T'Pol is, in my humble opinion, the best example of a Number One. A claim can be made for why others in this position could be your candidate for the No. 1 of Number Ones.

Mr. Spock was Capt. Kirk's Number One. His cool Vulcan demeanor was the perfect foil to Kirk's suave, sometimes take-no-prisoners style of command. He was Kirk's best friend, and maybe that was needed to get the job done.

Riker was the next to be in the second seat on a ship called *Enterprise* in a *Star Trek* series. He was the one who took the chances, who was a bit more outgoing than the stern Capt. Jean-Luc Picard. No matter what the situation was, he would offer Picard his true opinions of the situation so that the captain could make the right decisions.

For Capt. Kathryn Janeway, it was Chakotay who was there for her in all situations. Even though she had Tuvok as her Number One to begin with, and he being a Vulcan like Spock, she enlisted Chakotay to be her Number One for the length of their journey back to Earth. Not an original member of the crew and a leader of the Maquis, he offered Capt. Janeway a different point of view to advise her on decisions that she needed to make.



When *Enterprise* first appeared on television on Sept. 26, 2001 (35 years after the premiere of *TOS* on TV), the creators of the series, Rick Berman and Brannon Braga, chose not to have a designated Number One on board the NX-01. In a major change in the relationship between the Vulcans and Earthlings, the Vulcans were presented as holding back humanity from the reaches of deep space. On its first mission, the NX-01 was sent to return a Klingon to his home world of Qo'noS with one provision: a Vulcan was to accompany the crew. The one tapped to fill this role was Sub-Commander T'Pol. From the moment she boarded the NX-01, she was not a welcome guest, let alone a respected crew member. Capt. Jonathan Archer treated her as a potential spy, someone likely to report directly to the Vulcan High Command, and someone he felt was rooting for the mission to fail.

From the moment she held her nose at the smell of Porthos (of Porthos!), she was made to be a problem for Capt. Archer and the crew. Yet, when Capt. Archer was injured in the shootout on



Rigel X or when he was left behind on the Suliban Helix, it could have been the time for T'Pol to “pull the plug” on the mission and return to Earth. Yet, she chose to do the right thing, saving Capt. Archer and completing the mission to return Klaang so that the secrets he contained in his blood could help the Klingons.

As the series progressed, T'Pol would be tested in ways that only made her character stronger and more of a member of the crew. She would suffer her own issues with health, and she had an on-again, off-again relationship

with Chief Engineer Trip Tucker. When she appeared in underwear in the Decon chamber, viewers of the series would consider her looks as the reason for her appearance in the show (as did some for Seven of Nine on *Voyager*).

Yet, it was the writers who took the time to expand her character and for her to become the trusted adviser and second-in-command of the Enterprise. There were enough times in the four seasons of *Enterprise* to show that she was a worthy Number One to Capt. Archer. She was always there, right up to the end of the series, comforting the captain as he spoke before the signing of the charter of the United Federation of Planets. The last thing she says to Capt. Archer is, “You look very heroic.” In return, Archer hugs her, showing the respect that they had for each other, that they were true friends.

In the end, what makes a great Number One? That person needs to overcome adversity and

some distrust, build upon issues that might arise with the captain of a starship, and be the loyal and trustworthy person whom a starship’s crew relies upon. A case can be made for every Number One that has appeared on a *Star Trek* series up to and including Capt. Pike’s original and current Number One on *Strange New Worlds*, that being Una Chin-Riley. Yet, I feel that T'Pol made the most of her character’s advancement, and she is my choice for the prime number of Number Ones.



STEPHEN MIRKIN: I first learned about science fiction the moment I was able to reach the on/off knob on my parents’ black-and-white TV set. Being born in 1956, I was there on Sept. 8, 1966 to watch the first episode of *Star Trek*. Since then, I have watched every TV series and every movie, and I only look forward to the next great *Star Trek* moment.



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RIKER'S MANEUVERS: COMMAND FROM THE AWAY TEAM

MELISSA A. BARTELL

The Away Team Evolution

On *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Commander William T. Riker stands at the intersection between diplomacy and action, intellect and instinct. As first officer of the Enterprise-D, he embodies Starfleet's dual identity — the explorer and the soldier, the scientist and the strategist. Yet Riker's most defining trait may not be his loyalty to Capt. Jean-Luc Picard or his swagger on the bridge, but his near-constant position away from it. By design and temperament, Riker leads from the field.

When *The Next Generation* launched in 1987, it inherited a rich storytelling template from *The Original Series*. In *TOS*, Captain Kirk himself beamed down with his "landing party," taking the captain's chair of adventure into every crisis. That choice gave the original show its visceral immediacy — Kirk on the ground meant stakes were high. But *TNG* evolved the idea for a new era: It separated command from risk. The "away team" structure preserved the adventure but reflected Starfleet's professionalization. The captain would stay aboard the flagship, managing diplomacy and strategy, while the first officer — Riker — would em-



body that command in person.

This innovation served both drama and character. It let *TNG* be simultaneously cerebral and kinetic, with Picard as philosopher-captain and Riker as the arm and heart of the mission. Picard could negotiate peace treaties and debate the Prime Directive from orbit, while Riker took the audience down to the dirt, the danger and the diplomacy of the unknown.

Instinct and Adaptation

Riker thrived in that space between protocol and improvisation. His authority wasn't based on formality but on presence. He commanded by confidence — by walking into a new environment, absorbing it, and adjusting faster than anyone else.

In "A Matter of Honor," when he participates in an officer exchange and joins a Klingon crew, he adapts within hours. He learns their customs, eats their food, and, crucially, respects their hierarchy without losing himself. It's a masterclass in leadership under alien conditions: observe, adapt, lead.

Sometimes, though, adaptation meant enduring discomfort — moral, cultural or personal. In "Angel One," Riker must navigate a matriarchal world where men are considered subordinate. Outfitted in a deliberately provocative local costume, he balances diplomacy with dignity, challenging gender expectations without insulting his hosts. The episode may date itself visually, but its underlying test for Riker — how to uphold Federation values in a culture built on inequality — remains

compelling. He doesn't dominate or dictate; he reasons, listens, and finds a path through contradiction. For a commander who often leads by instinct, "Angel One" forces him into patience, humility and cultural intelligence.

Across seven seasons, these missions built a portrait of a leader who acts before he doubts, but never before he understands. When he faces moral compromise in "The Pegasus," Riker's experience on those away teams shows: Leadership isn't only about surviving danger — it's about carrying the weight of your own choices. That tension between instinct and ethics defines him.

The Dual Command

Riker's contrast with Picard deepens this understand-



ing. Picard represents the Federation's intellect — diplomacy, restraint and the careful parsing of every consequence. Riker embodies its courage — decisiveness, improvisation and the willingness to act in incomplete certainty. Together, they form a complete command system: Picard's moral compass steering Riker's forward momentum. It's no accident that when Picard needs someone to represent him in the field, Riker is always the choice.

The away team device also



served the ensemble. It allowed characters like Data, Worf and Geordi La Forge to interact directly with alien cultures under Riker's guidance, creating layers of chemistry and tension that deepened both the missions and the crew relationships. Riker's leadership gave those moments shape — the calm authority that kept a landing

party cohesive even when things went sideways.

Command as Philosophy

Riker's maneuvers, then, are more than tactical. They're philosophical. They show that command is not just a position, but a posture — forward-leaning, engaged, human. He meets every situation with curiosity and cour-

age, trusting his instincts because he's done the work to earn them. In a show defined by intellect and ethics, Riker ensures there's still muscle in the mission — not the reckless bravado of the past, but the confident stride of a leader who knows that exploration, like command, requires both head and heart.

He may not always sit in the captain's chair, but when the transporter beam fades and the ground steadies beneath his boots, Riker is the embodiment of what Starfleet is meant to be: prepared, adaptable and unafraid to take the first step.

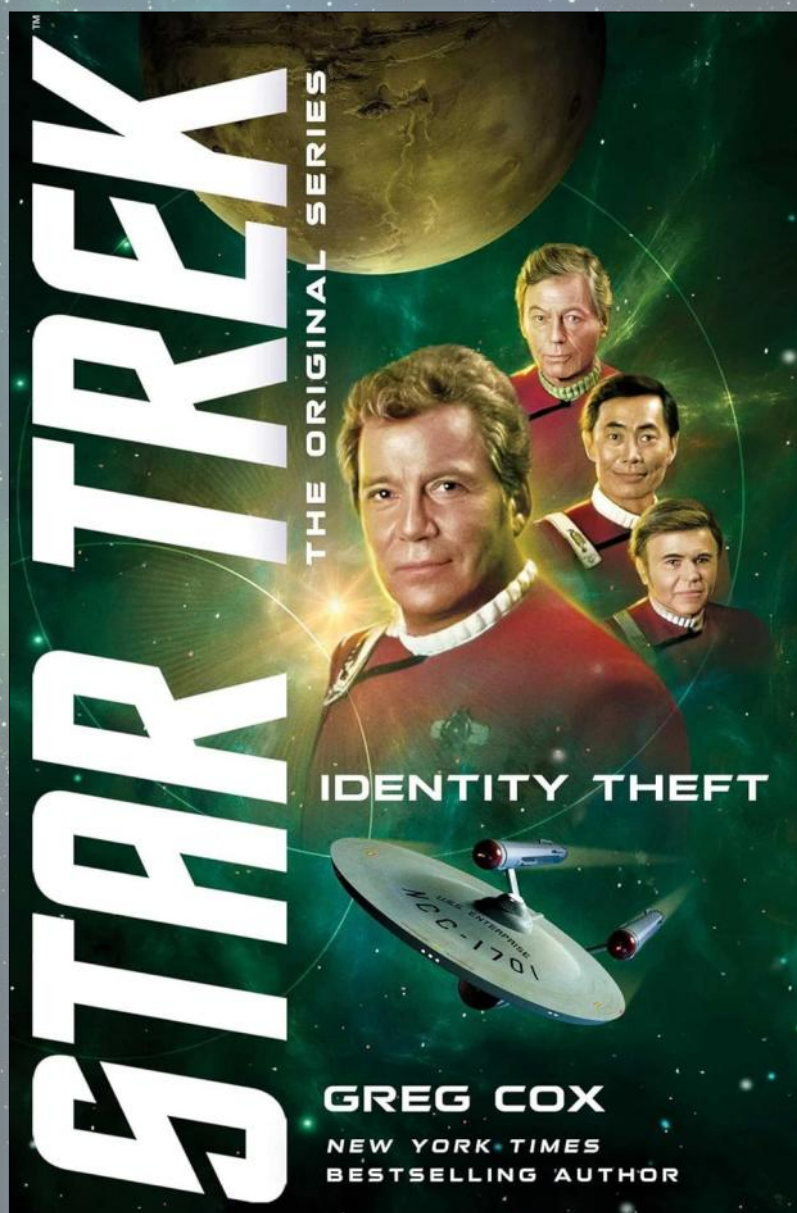


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SARU

THE THINKING FIRST OFFICER

MELISSA A. BARTELL

In a franchise filled with decisive captains and swashbuckling explorers, Commander Saru stands apart. His leadership is not built on daring or charm, but on intellect, empathy, and the deliberate act of thinking before he acts. If Starfleet's captains represent the heart of exploration, Saru is its mind — and, increasingly, its conscience.

Where others leap, Saru measures. Where others command by force of personality, he commands by presence. From the beginning of *Star Trek: Discovery*, his journey reframes what it means to lead in Starfleet. In the 23rd-century chaos of war, temporal displacement, and moral uncertainty, Saru's stillness becomes absolutely revolutionary.

From Fear to Philosophy

When *Discovery* introduces him, Saru is defined by fear — literally. As a Kelpien, he belongs to a species bred as prey on his home world of Kaminar. Kelpiens evolved with heightened threat awareness, their “threat ganglia” alerting them to danger. That biology makes Saru cautious, but also extraordinarily perceptive. He notices details others overlook, reads emotional currents like an empath, and senses risk before logic identifies it.

Early on, that instinct makes him seem anxious, even timid. Under Captain Gabriel Lorca, whose ruthlessness borders on cruelty, Saru's caution reads as weakness. But Lorca's brutality becomes the forge in which Saru's philosophy of command takes shape. He learns that fear need not be banished to act with cour-

age; it can be understood, integrated, and directed. His strength is not the absence of fear but the sheer mastery of it.

That distinction becomes clear in the episode “Choose Your Pain.” When Saru temporarily assumes command during the Klingon War, he measures himself against Starfleet's greatest captains. His anxiety is not insecurity but self-interrogation: can a being who has always run from predators truly lead others into danger? The answer, hard-won over multiple crises, is yes — because Saru's caution is not paralysis, it is calculation. He acts only after considering every variable, and once he does, his decisions are immovable.

By “Si Vis Pacem, Para Bellum,” when an alien planet amplifies his fear into aggression, Saru's internal struggle surfaces physically. The episode literalizes the tension between instinct and intellect that defines him. Once freed, he acknowledges what happened not as shame but as insight: awareness without reflection is perilous. That lesson carries

forward into every subsequent command decision he makes.

The Counterbalance to Chaos

If Lorca sharpened Saru's caution, Michael Burnham refined his empathy. Burnham's command style is passionate, improvisational, and often rule-breaking — a legacy of both her Vulcan upbringing and her human heart. She acts first and apologizes later, driven by conviction that the right thing is worth the risk.

Saru is her counterweight. He sees the same truths she does but insists on structure. Their partnership becomes a study in duality: impulse and reason, heat and light. Burnham's defiance challenges Saru to trust intuition; Saru's deliberation teaches Burnham to pause. Together, they create a balance reminiscent of Spock and Kirk, or Riker and Picard — the necessary dialogue between thought and action that defines great Starfleet command teams.

Their friction early in the series feels personal because it is: Saru resents Burnham's mutiny in





“The Vulcan Hello,” which he perceives as betrayal of Starfleet’s ideals. Yet his eventual forgiveness reveals his capacity for growth. Saru’s empathy expands with his understanding. He comes to see that following rules is not always the same as serving principles. By the time the Discovery jumps into the 32nd century, Saru and Burnham have moved beyond opposition into complement. When one falters, the other steadies the course.

That evolution peaks in “The Sound of Thunder,” when Saru returns to Kaminar and confronts the Ba’ul, the species that oppressed his people. Where a younger version of him might have sought vengeance, Saru instead pursues liberation through knowledge. He dismantles an ancient lie not with violence but with truth, freeing his world by understanding it. That moment crystallizes his leadership philoso-

phy: awareness, tempered by compassion, is the most powerful weapon in Starfleet’s arsenal.

Later, when Saru temporarily commands the Discovery, his bridge becomes a study in composure. He does not dominate the room; he centers it. His authority is quiet, based on mutual respect and trust. Even when Burnham returns to the captain’s chair, Saru’s loyalty is not subservience but partnership. He leads beside her, not beneath her.

The Evolution of Command

Saru’s measured style does more than define his character — it broadens the vocabulary of Star Trek leadership itself. From Kirk to Pike, Starfleet captains have tended toward the bold: charismatic figures who lead by daring and instinct. Picard intellectualized that model, embodying the philosopher-captain whose diplomacy carries as much weight as his

orders. Janeway and Sisko, each in their own way, merged intellect with passion.

Saru adds a new dimension: leadership as mindfulness. He listens before he speaks. He weighs emotion and logic equally. He sees vulnerability not as a flaw but as information. His command is analytical but never cold, cautious but never detached. It’s an evolution of the same thoughtful command tradition that once kept Picard on the bridge while Riker led the away team — but here,





the thinker is in the field, guiding others through crisis by the steadiness of his mind.

In that sense, Saru is the mirror opposite of Burnham's impulsive heroism. Where she often embodies the Federation's drive to explore, Saru embodies its discipline to endure. His leadership is the connective tissue that lets the *Discovery* and her crew survive its most extreme circumstances — from the Mirror Universe to the far-future Federation's collapse. When others lose faith, Saru restores it by modeling calm. His presence is not overtly theatrical, yet its impact is profound: he slows the narrative tempo, reminding both crew and audience that moral clarity requires time.

Even his physicality conveys this philosophy. Doug Jones' performance — all elongated posture, deliberate movements, and expressive eyes — turns Saru's alien physiology into a kind of meditation. Every gesture feels intentional. Every pause carries weight. The body that once trembled in fear now radiates control. Through him, the show literalizes the transformation from instinct-

tive survival to conscious leadership.

As *Discovery* moves into its later seasons, Saru's story becomes less about overcoming fear and more about teaching others to coexist with it. His mentorship of younger officers, his diplomatic missions on behalf of the fractured Federation, and his quiet advocacy for understanding across species all reflect the same core belief: progress requires empathy as much as courage. When he eventually steps back from daily command to serve as a Federation ambassador, the transition feels inevitable — the culmination of a career built not on glory but on grace.

Thought as Heroism

Star Trek has always celebrated the act of thinking — of questioning, reasoning, and choosing the moral path even when it's the hardest one. Saru embodies that ethos more completely than any modern Starfleet officer. He represents a maturity of leadership that the 21st-century viewer recognizes: reflective rather than reactive, patient rather than performative.

His heroism lies not in his ability to fight but in his capacity to understand. He brings the same discipline to diplomacy that others bring to battle, and in doing so, he redefines courage. It's not the absence of fear, nor even its conquest, but the ability to move forward with full awareness of it — to act with integrity when instinct screams otherwise.

Saru's thinking command complements Burnham's passionate one, just as intellect has always complemented instinct throughout *Trek's* history. Together, they illustrate that exploration is not a race toward discovery but a conversation with it — one that requires both the daring to leap and the wisdom to look first.

In the end, Saru proves that a commander's greatest strength may not be speed, strategy, or even charisma. It may be the courage to pause. To think clearly. To lead with the mind open and the heart steady. In the silence between impulse and action, Saru reminds us that thought itself can be an act of faith — and that in Starfleet, as in life, the most enduring kind of bravery is the kind that listens.



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THE THREE FACES OF SPOCK

MONA MEHAS





In the *Star Trek* franchise, everyone knows who Spock is. Honestly, even folks who are not fans of the show know a little about Spock. I watch a YouTube program about the founding of Appalachia. The host is a man about my age, a retired professor. In a recent episode he said, "As Spock would say, *Fascinating*."

I love all *Star Trek* and all versions of Mr. Spock. The actors have portrayed him similarly in many basic ways but different in many others. I'll compare the three here, from third to first. These opinions are totally my own, and not those of *Engage!* or anyone else who works on the journal.

3. Ethan Peck

Why am I starting with No. 3? Because I look at this Spock as the precursor to the others. This is young Spock, struggling more with his emotional human half than in other versions. We see him first in

Discovery as Captain Michael Burnham's brother. Here he seems to be more aloof, much like a brooding teenager, than later in *Strange New Worlds*. The writers of *SNW* and Ethan Peck certainly stepped up to allow Spock to be a more well-rounded person.

In *Strange New Worlds*, Spock has a love affair with Christine Chapel. Although he has been engaged to T'Pol, a fellow Vulcan, since childhood, the proximity and allure of the attractive blonde nurse is undeniable. I believe Chapel helps open Spock up to his human side where T'Pol isn't able to do that, nor does she appreciate it. T'Pol is more seri-



ous and traditional, Chapel is foot-loose and fancy free. Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on how we feel about it) it is just those aspects of the nurse that lead to the demise of her and Spock's relationship. She leaves to study with Roger Korby and that's the end of her and Spock. Where Spock's love life picks up is with La'an Noonien-Singh. They have hot chemistry that is off the charts. What begins as dance lessons with this descendant of Khan quickly becomes a full-blown affair.

2. Zachary Quinto

In the *Kelvin* Universe movies, this Spock is involved with Nyota Uhura, the communications officer on the Enterprise. At first, we see them stealing alone time in a turbo lift or hallway. Later they don't hide their love. Even though the timeline is similar to that of *Strange New Worlds*, I still consider Spock's emotional development as a growth from Chris-



tine and La'An. They kiss in front of Kirk and others. Spock gifts Uhura with a special necklace made from an element from his world.

Spock discovers that he and his shipmates are in a different reality where Ambassador Spock is a well respected elder. The older Spock helps to establish "New Vulcan" after Vulcan is destroyed. Young Spock seeks advice from his older self on dealing with Khan. It's interesting that he is involved with a different Noonien-Singh in this iteration. Later, when he learns of the Ambassador's death he sees his own death date. Who would not be thrown at learning this?

Quinto does an amazing

job of showing, while trying not to show, emotion.

1. Leonard Nimoy

The quintessential Spock. The one most people think of when they remember Spock. Nimoy embodies the character the longest – *The Original Series*, *The Animated Series*, eight *TOS* movies, and two *Kelvin* movies. It's no wonder he is everyone's Spock. Although most of these iterations of *Star Trek* occur in the same chronological time period, Nimoy gives us a more mature, in control Spock.

I am the type of person who needs to make everything fit. So, in my head canon, this is Spock after all his failed relationships of the past. Christine Chapel left him for Roger, but we don't know yet what happens to end his romances with La'An and Nyota. But end they must, for this version of Spock is more mature, more careful to guard his emotions, perhaps more damaged by the losses. In *The Original Series*, we see Spock

involved with other women but it's usually because he's compromised in one way or another. To add injury to insult, T'Pol rejects him for another man. It's no wonder Spock is stoic.

I am not choosing which actor does the best job or which version of Spock I prefer. In my eyes, all three men do an excellent job of portraying one of our iconic idols.

Live long and prosper.



MONA MEHAS: Mona Mehas (she/her) is a retired disabled teacher in Indiana, USA. Twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize (*Paddler Press* 2023, *TV-63 Project*, 2025) and Best New Poet (*Lucky Jefferson* 2024). Mona's work has appeared in multiple publications and online museums. She helps edit a small press, works with an online *Star Trek* fan magazine, and is Indiana Co-Leader for Authors Against Book Bans. Mona is editing her second novel while perpetually distracted by her next chapbook.

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WHY STAR TREK IS IMPORTANT TO ME

JENNIFER WHITESIDE

On May 8, 2024, Wil Wheaton shared a post from his blog that hit me right in the core of my being. This line especially: “*Star Trek* is bigger than any single one of us, and it has the power to change the world.” That is the simple truth. *Star Trek* inspires those who will let it. It inspires us to be better people in so many ways. To make space for those who are different from us. To care for those in need. To care for the Earth. To reach for the stars.

I wouldn’t be who I am without *Star Trek*. My dad had me watch *TNG* with him from “Encounter at Farpoint” until he died three years later. After he died, I kept watching, because it was like having a piece of him with me again. And as I watched, the characters for *TNG* helped shape my ideals and priorities.

I saw that Black people had a place in the future from watching Geordi and Guinan. Very little other sci-fi at the time showed people who looked like me in positions of authority, if there were any Black people at all. But Geordi worked his way up to Chief Engineer, and Guinan was the trusted advisor to two captains and the whole crew. I saw women in positions of authority,



**Beyond the characters
and their interactions,
though, is the core
tenet of *Star Trek* –
hope.**

from Chief Medical Officer to counselor to captain to admiral. They weren’t dismissed because of their gender, and if someone did something for them that required greater strength, it was usually Worf or Data, who did that for any of the human crew anyway.

In Captain Picard, I saw a man in the position of ultimate authority on the Enterprise, but he wasn’t autocratic in his mannerisms. He listened to the advice of his senior staff, and even junior members of the crew. He showed compassion, dignity, and diplomacy. He showed that just because you can beat someone to a pulp, doesn’t mean that you have to. But Picard didn’t back down from a fight when a fight was needed. He just knew that there were





There are many ways in which the characters of *TNG* inspire us. They show us compassion, love, empathy, understanding and so much more.

more ways to resolve things than physical violence. Between him and Riker, I had father figures to look up to, men who showed me that physical strength isn't the be all and end all of what it means to be a man.

Beverly Crusher and Deanna Troi showed me two different types of caregivers. And they showed that just because those were their roles on the ship, it didn't mean that they would back down from a fight, either. My mom raised me on her own after my dad died, so I saw our family reflected in the relationship between Beverly and Wesley. And being an above average kid in many respects, I understood some of what Wesley was going through. Troi's compassion and wisdom has always taken my breath away. To feel what she feels, to know what she knows, and still have so much love for the people around her? There is immense strength to that.

Beyond the characters and their interactions, though, is the core tenant of *Star Trek* — hope. There is always hope. There is always a light in the darkness, a path through the brambles, a way to move forward and do better. Tied into that is the idea behind IDIC, Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations. We are each unique, and that uniqueness deserves its place in the universe.



JENNIFER WHITESIDE: My dad gave me the gift of *Star Trek* when I was young, and I'm forever grateful for it. I share a love of chocolate with Deanna Troi, and my sense of justice has been greatly informed by Captain Picard.

STAR TREK

60

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FREE WOMEN OF



SEA & STARS

MELISSA A. BARTELL

Names matter. They carry echoes, shadows and histories, even when the person wearing the name doesn't know it. Sometimes a name is a promise. Sometimes it's a burden. And sometimes it's a signal across centuries, like a call and response that was never supposed to happen but does anyway.

Sayyida al Hurra's name meant "the free woman." She was born Lalla Aicha bint Ali ibn Rashid al-Alami in 1485 in Morocco. By the time she took the throne of Tétouan after her husband's death, the name *Sayyida al Hurra* had become both a title and a declaration. She was the free woman. The noble lady. The one who owed allegiance to no man.

She ruled not as a placeholder or regent, but in her own right. She governed the city, commanded fleets, and wielded political alliances like weapons. She struck a partnership with the famed Ottoman corsair Barbarossa, and together they turned the Mediterranean into a stage for their power. Her ships raided Portuguese and Spanish vessels, reclaiming wealth stolen from North Africa, and striking fear into colonial powers that had assumed the sea belonged to them. In a world where women were expected to remain invisible — domestic, cloistered, silent — she carved her name across the waves. Not as a wife. Not as a consort. As herself. Freedom was never handed to Sayyida al Hurra. She seized it, ship by ship, raid by raid, decree by decree.

Centuries later, in a television studio in 1960s Los Angeles, another woman bore a name that



also meant freedom. Nyota Uhura, the communications officer on the starship *Enterprise*. Her surname came from the Swahili word *uhuru* — "freedom." Her first name, Nyota, meant "star." Freedom, among the stars.

When Nichelle Nichols first appeared on screen in that red uniform, calm and authoritative at the communications console, she was a revelation. A Black woman not in the background, not a maid or a comic foil, but a respected officer on the bridge of a starship, working alongside men of every race and nationality. At a time

when segregation was still raw and civil rights marches filled the streets, her presence on *Star Trek* was more than casting. It was a statement.

Martin Luther King Jr. famously urged Nichols not to leave the show when she considered quitting, reminding her that she was shaping the image of what the future could look like. And she stayed — not just as a performer, but as a symbol. Uhura was proof that the future was wide enough for women, for Black women, for voices that had been excluded for too long.

Sayyida al Hurra ruled the seas. Nyota Uhura navigated the stars. Both were free women who claimed spaces where the world didn't expect to see them.

And maybe that's why their names feel like a call and response across centuries. One woman staring down colonial empires with cannons, the other calling through the darkness and connecting people with her voice. One a queen commanding fleets, the other an officer commanding language itself, translating chaos into order, holding her crew together with words.





Both of them remind us that freedom isn't something handed down politely. It isn't permission, or a token seat at the table. It's something fought for, taken, and lived in..

The parallels between sea and sky are older than either woman. Mariners have always looked to the stars for guidance. Conquerors, dreamers, and wanderers have always compared the unknown ocean to the uncharted cosmos. The sea is a mirror for the sky, and the sky is a mirror for the sea. Sayyida al Hurra's fleets cut across one, while Uhura's voice bridged the other. Both women commanded liminal spaces — places that belong to no one and everyone, places that promise freedom and danger in equal measure.

And both carried names

that told the world exactly who they were: free women.

In our own moment, their stories intertwine as more than trivia. They are reminders of possibility. When I hear Sayyida al Hurra's name, I hear the echo of resistance — a woman who refused to be silenced, who claimed her right to rule, who struck fear into empires. When I hear Nyota Uhura's, I hear the promise of representation — a woman who stood on the bridge of the future, showing us all that freedom could mean equality, visibility, dignity — *belonging*.

Sea and stars. Corsair queen and starship queen. And perhaps it isn't only coincidence, but a hidden continuity — as if Uhura were, in some imagined genealogy, the descendant of Sayyida al Hurra herself, a free wom-

an of the seas reborn among the stars, carrying forward the legacy of command, defiance, and freedom in a new frontier.



MELISSA A. BARTELL: Melissa A. Bartell is a writer, podcaster, voice actor, improviser and kayak junkie currently living on Florida's Nature Coast. She has one husband, two dogs and only one kayak (so far). Find her at MissMeliss.com or on social media:

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SHE CHANGED THE FACE OF SPACE



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CO PRODUCED BY NICHELLE NICHOLS PRODUCED BY TIM FRANTA, DAVID TECK & TODD THOMPSON DIRECTED BY TODD THOMPSON



NAME THE FIRST OFFICER

1. Enterprise _____
2. Enterprise NX-01 _____
3. Protostar _____
4. Enterprise _____
5. Okinawa & Saratoga _____
6. Discovery _____
7. Relativity _____
8. DS9 & Defiant _____
9. Defiant _____
10. Cerritos _____
11. Sutherland _____
12. Titan A _____
13. Discovery _____
14. Pagh, Hood, Enterprise D & E _____
15. Discovery _____
16. Equinox _____
17. Protostar _____
18. Voyager A & Dauntless _____
19. Credence _____
20. Kelvin _____
21. Discovery _____
22. Ibn Majid _____
23. Cerritos _____
24. Enterprise & Bradbury _____
25. Enterprise G _____
26. Voyager _____
27. Enterprise D _____
28. Enterprise C _____
29. Voyager _____
30. Cerritos _____
31. Stargazer _____

Boimler
 Shelby
 George Kirk
 Burke
 Ducane
 Sisko
 Rios
 Spock
 Ficket
 Una-Chin Riley
 Moshe
 Worf
 Riker
 Hobson
 Musiker
 Saru
 Kira Nerys
 Adreek
 Tysess
 Hansen
 Chakotay
 Decker
 Ransom
 Rayner
 Burnham
 Mariner
 T'Pol
 Cavitt
 Gwyndala
 Holmes
 Tilly

Answers on Page 37



FAN ART



BOBBY LINN



LIMERICK TIME with CRAFTYBEAR

FIRST OFFICERS

A first officer will never flinch
They can take charge of the ship in a pinch
They all have their Captain's back
And will defend from attacks
They make sure things run without a hitch



MICHAEL JONAS

We've been put in a bad situation
This journey will not be a vacation
I thought we needed the help
It turned out bad for my health
Got in too deep sending her information



LIMERICK TIME with CRAFTYBEAR**JOURNEY'S END**

Like that bird I must be traveling on
The path I was on, turns out it was wrong
My father's path is not mine
I must leave that life behind
First this planet, then I'll see what's beyond



WORD SEARCH

D C S E H Z U Z H O L M E S H X G Q V L T X
C U S F V E S Z A S R A F G Z H U I M F Y Y
R K G Z R A B I U I W B V T Z W E Q S D S Q
R T Z D G H L T O Y Y M F A F Q N U H J E S
K Y E E O G T S D L D A T Y A O A A E Q S S
X I D P S A M U X L P E T P G Y C W H Q S D
J M R J W C M A R I G S K O O C U W S Y L P
M A L K L Z R A G T Y I X R K L D Q O U L W
Q N X O E M Y R R T V U O T U A Y K M R H Z
T R M M X N A X K O R W R X D B H F W E F Y
E U I S E N A C S A R P Z E T B W C B K B E
T B R R S R O U S T E B A E K C D O A I W L
G U Q O I P S H V D W M K O Y I I R B R J I
Q F M K S S X E O H E C W B R M S D G K O R
D T F A N V W V F B I C L S L E J U J F Y N
A K G B N V U G Y F S E K E Y W N O M D M I
P K C O E P S A I Q H O R E R M E I E C C H
U E N L S L Y I B S M T N Y R H Q I R Y Q C
Q E C I N Y C N S Y L T T I V A C I N A I G
P R K G A B F F U K H P L K V X Z T X E M M
D D C U H W F Q U Y O O I S D D L X F T U M
I A W E G D O E O M E G W E N D A L A I O P

ADREEK BOIMLER BURKE BURNAM CAVITT

CHAKOTAY CHINRILEY DECKER DUCANE

FICKET GWENDALA HANSEN HOBSON

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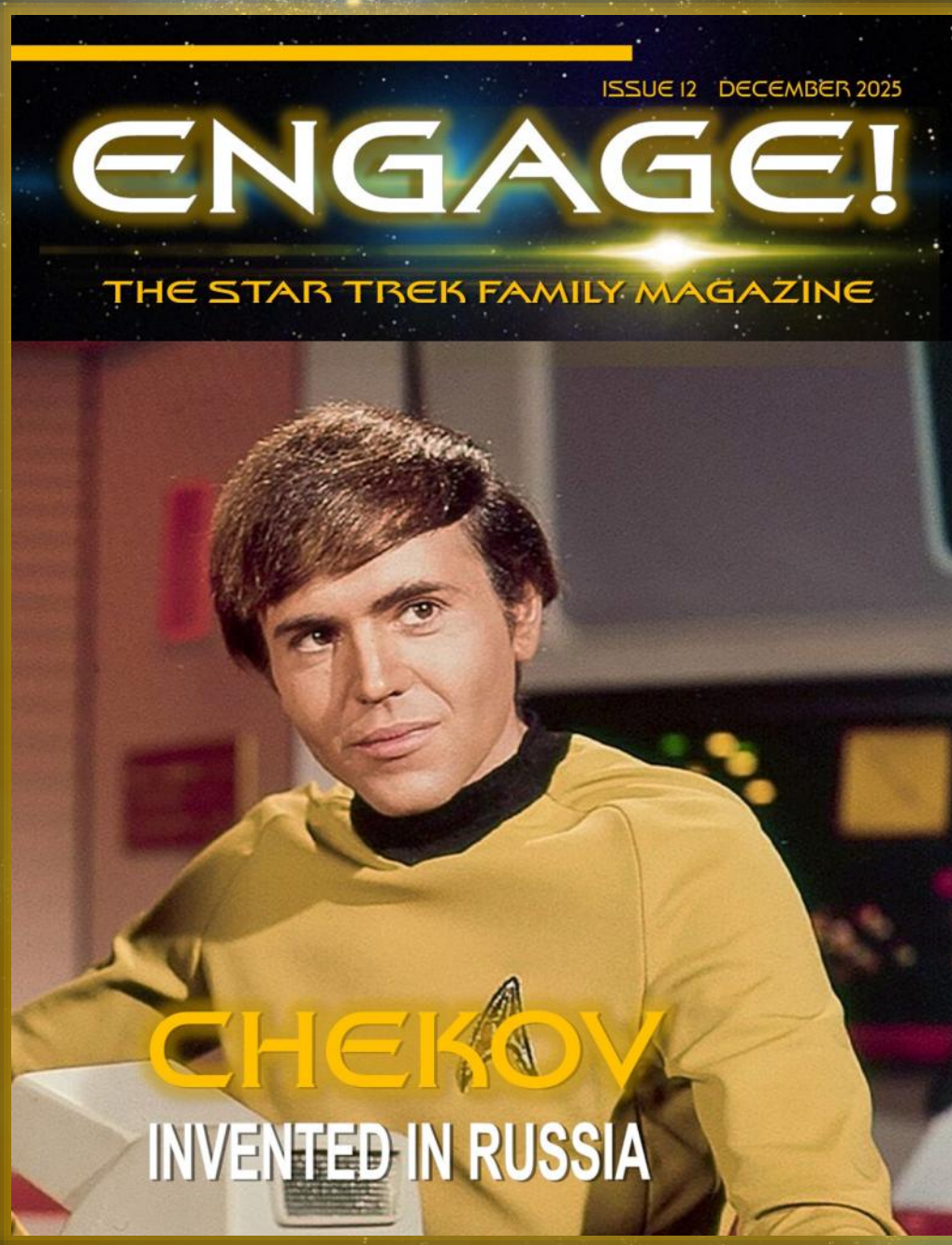
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OUR NEXT ISSUE

ANSWER KEY

1. Una Chin Riley
2. T'Pol
3. Gwyndala
4. Decker
5. Sisko
6. Rayner
7. Ducane
8. Kira Nerys
9. Worf
10. Boimler
11. Hobson
12. Hansen
13. Burnham
14. Riker
15. Saru
16. Burke
17. Adreek
18. Tysess
19. Fickett
20. George Kirk
21. Tilly
22. Rios
23. Mariner
24. Spock
25. Musiker
26. Cavitt
27. Shelby
28. Holmes
29. Chakotay
30. Ransom
31. Moshe

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