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<p data-start="0" data-end="1084" data-is-last-node=""><strong>Captain Xavier  
Vance</strong> (born April 18, 2351, in Texarkana, Texas) is a highly decorated Starfleet officer  
known for serving during the Dominion War and his subsequent leadership in peacetime  
operations. He quickly rose through the ranks during the war<span style="margin: 0px; padding:  
0px;">, eventually becoming Chief Tactical Officer aboard the USS <em>Keogh.</em> Vance  
earned the nickname "Lucky Vance" after surviving severe injuries during the Battle of Hawkins  
Pass.</span> He later served as the First Officer on the USS <em>Ehrenfest</em>, where his  
leadership resulted in numerous successful first contacts and charting of new sectors. Vance is  
known for his tactical acumen but has since focused on developing his diplomatic and emotional  
intelligence in response to the challenges of a post-war Starfleet. He is a father to two adult  
children, Alden and Maeve, both attending Starfleet Academy and has maintained close ties  
with his family despite his demanding career.</p>
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Vance stands at 5'11" (180 cm) with a heavy build. Weighing 218 pounds (99 kg), he carries his frame with ease and grace despite his size. His salt-and-pepper hair is kept short, often paired with a neatly trimmed beard that conceals a scar running down the left side of his face—a lasting mark from the same incident that took his arm and leg. His dark brown eyes, nearly black, hold a quiet intensity, revealing little of the pain he endures daily.

His left arm and leg are prosthetic, the result of a catastrophic injury sustained in the line of duty. Though the artificial limbs ache constantly, he rarely lets it show, masking his discomfort with practiced ease. Only a slight limp betrays him on his worst days.

Captain Vance is known for his keen tactical acumen. He is a veteran of the Dominion War, and with that, he still carries the emotional and physical scars that come with two years of intense combat. Years of counseling have helped him overcome PTSD. Because of this, he has embraced an anti-Kirk philosophy: you can do everything right and still fail.

While a strict disciplinarian, he is not rigid about it. He holds his crew to high standards but does not mindlessly follow Starfleet regulations at the cost of common sense. He trusts in his instincts as much as in protocol and is willing to take calculated risks when the situation demands. This earned him the moniker "Lucky Vance," originally meant as a joke about his improbable survivals but later as a grudging respect for his uncanny ability to read the flow of battle.

Unlike the image of a distant or harsh commander, Vance is charismatic and affable when the moment allows. He enjoys camaraderie with his officers, has a wry sense of humor, and is prone to moments of warmth, especially when sharing stories over a drink or meal. While he values respect and professionalism on duty, he does not mistake formality for competence. What matters to him is a crew that can think, adapt, and fight when it counts.

He trusts his instincts and experience to make split-second calls when pushed into battle. It might seem reckless to an outsider, but it's a calculated risk. He understands the cost of war and does not seek conflict, but he believes in hitting hard and fast to end it on his terms when it is unavoidable. When provoked into combat, he will offer no quarter until eliminating the immediate threat. To his enemies, this might be seen as ruthless—Klingon-like.

Vance is not a flawless commander. His willingness to bend the rules sometimes draws scrutiny from those who prefer strict adherence to regulations, and his reliance on instinct can frustrate officers who value precision over intuition. But those who serve under him quickly learn that his loyalty is unwavering. He takes care of his crew, pushes them to be their best, and stands with them when things go wrong. He does not demand perfection, only courage, competence, and the willingness to rise to the occasion.

### Early Life:

Xavier Vance grew up on a 50-acre farm outside Texarkana, a city straddling the Texas-Arkansas border. His parents, Christopher and Linda, were part of a small, tight-knit community that valued self-sufficiency over modern conveniences. Unlike the rest of the Federation, which had largely abandoned traditional agriculture in favor of replicators, the Vances and their neighbors chose to live off the land. They grew their own food, raised livestock, and traded what they couldn't consume.

But their way of life made them outcasts. Traditional meat consumption had become an uncomfortable relic of the past, rendered unnecessary due to replicators. To outsiders, their farm was a stubborn relic of the past—quaint at best, primitive at worst. While their crops were valued in trade, the idea of butchering animals for food met with open disapproval, seen as cruel and unenlightened.

By Federation standards, the Vances were poor. They had no replicators, no formal schooling, and no integration into modern society. But they had something else—land, family, and hard-earned skills.

Xavier was the third of four children, growing up alongside his older brothers, Chris Jr. and David, and his younger sister, Michelle. Like all the Vance children, he was homeschooled, but their education was more practical than academic. Linda did her best, but physics and literature didn't put food on the table. The real lessons came from the land—learning to mend fences, rotate crops, tend livestock, and survive.

But Xavier wanted more.

#### **Dreams Beyond the Horizon**

After the farmwork was done at night, he would lose himself in books, *Treasure Island*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Dune*—stories of grand adventures across oceans and distant stars. He imagined himself at the helm of a starship, standing where explorers and captains had stood

before him. Or perhaps ordering a broadside from the bridge of a grand ship-of-the-line against pirates or the detestable French.

Then, at sixteen, he read Jonathan Archer's autobiography. From that point on, he wanted something more than a farm of his own; he wanted to travel the stars. He knew he had to leave from that moment to be a Starfleet officer.

But dreams didn't change reality. He had no transcripts or formal education and barely enough knowledge to pass a basic aptitude test. Starfleet Academy required years of rigorous schooling, and he had nothing but the farm's lessons and a handful of books.

Still, he tried.

At seventeen, Xavier took the Starfleet Academy entrance exam and failed spectacularly. His mother, though sympathetic, was relieved. His father, however, was quietly heartbroken. Christopher had spent his entire life of hard graft under the sun with no real change in sight. He didn't want that for his children, least of all for Xavier—the only one who dared to dream beyond the farm.

So, Christopher made a choice. He found help.

#### **The Hardest Road**

Galin Thurgood was a retired Academy professor who had settled in Texarkana. He agreed to tutor Vance for free. Christopher, too proud to accept charity, struck a deal: one bag of fresh produce a week, and Xavier would handle the upkeep of Thurgood's lawn and home.

For three grueling years, Xavier split his time between farmwork and study. By day, he was a farmer, plowing fields, fixing irrigation lines, and milking cows. By night, Xavier was a student, memorizing

equations and dissecting star charts. He struggled with subjects he should have learned a decade earlier. Some nights, he never slept, finishing homework to head straight to the barn before dawn.

He failed practice exams. He doubted himself. There were moments when he almost gave up. But then, he would remember the endless fields stretching beyond the farm. The same fields his father had spent a lifetime breaking his back over. If he stayed, this would be his future. And as much as he loved his family, he couldn't accept that.

In 2371, at age twenty, Xavier retook the Starfleet entrance exam. This time, he passed.

Barely.

But barely was enough. Xavier Vance was accepted into the Academy's class of 2375. When he left the farm for the last time, his father shook his hand, a gesture of quiet pride. His mother held him too long, whispering, "Don't forget where you came from."

### Starfleet Academy:

Vance worked long days and nights for three years to earn a place at the Academy. But once accepted, he found himself burned out. The newfound distractions of living alone only made matters worse, and Vance struggled to keep up academically. Already behind his peers in education, he spent his entire time at the Academy on academic probation.

Vance chose to major in Security/Tactical Sciences, figuring it would be one of the easier paths through the Academy. While he coasted through his general education courses, he struggled to stay engaged and often did just enough to pass. However, Vance showed a natural aptitude that set him apart in strategy and tactics. Growing up on that East Texas farm, he had strength and endurance that many of his classmates lacked. Thus, the physical aspects of his training came easily to him.

Vance quickly earned a reputation as an infamous prankster. During the final week of his sophomore year, he reprogrammed every Academy replicator to serve nothing but pecan pie, much to the amusement of his classmates—and the faculty's frustration. In another stunt, he smuggled a live chicken into the Commandant's office, where the bird promptly did what birds do, leaving an unholy mess in its wake. As punishment, Vance spent the remainder of the semester cleaning the office with his toothbrush. His legendary antics made him popular amongst the student body and attracted his instructors' scrutiny.

Despite his struggles, Vance made many friendships at the Academy. Thaddius Young, a fellow human cadet, and Malin Prin, a mischievous Bajoran, became two of his closest friends, often involved in his pranks. Thaddius tried to be the voice of reason and usually failed to keep Vance in check. Malin, however, enthusiastically encouraged his more reckless tendencies.

At the Academy, Vance also met Malinda Davis, who would one day become his wife. They met in Alien Languages class, a course Vance was struggling with. Spotting an opportunity to spend time with the beautiful and intelligent Malinda, he convinced her to tutor him—something he genuinely needed, though she never suspected his ulterior motive. At the end of the semester, he asked her out after barely scraping by with a passing grade on the final. She was reluctant at first, but to his surprise, she accepted.

With the Dominion War escalating and Starfleet desperate for officers, the Academy condensed its training program. Already struggling academically, Vance quickly fell further behind. He likely would have been expelled without Malinda's relentless tutoring and Starfleet's urgent demand for graduates.

On May 16, 2374, Xavier Vance graduated last in his class with a Security & Tactical Sciences degree. With more prestigious postings taken by his higher-ranking peers, his only option was a frontline ground assignment on Talius V—one of the war's bloodiest battlefields.

### <h3>The Dominion War:</h3>

#### <h4>Talium V</h4>

Assigned to Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 15th Regiment of the 92nd Security Division, Ensign Vance became a junior platoon leader. Transitioning from the relative comfort of Starfleet Academy to the gritty and perilous frontline was a daunting challenge. Many of his fellow replacements crumbled under pressure, but despite his terror, Vance managed to channel his fear and perform his duties as a soldier.

Talius V, a strategic planet within Federation space along the Cardassian border, was a vital supply and logistics hub. The planet's rocky and tree-covered terrain allowed the Jem'Hadar to appear without warning and disappear into the foliage just as swiftly. The constant threat kept Vance and his unit on high alert, forging them into a resilient, battle-hardened team.

Delta Company received orders to capture Hill 34 at the end of June. It was a worthless chunk of rock that offered neither side any real strategic advantage, but they fought for it because the enemy was there. All night long, Starfleet runabouts and other small craft rained down micro-photon torpedoes, lighting up the night sky in brilliant flashes of antimatter explosions. The screams and shouts of pain from the Jem'hadar sent chills down the spines of the waiting Starfleet officers.

At dawn, the order came. The company commander led the charge, convinced the bombardment had broken the enemy's will. Vance's 3rd Platoon advanced up the steepest section, using jagged boulders and scorched tree trunks as cover. The climb was eerily quiet. No resistance. No return fire.

Vance had studied the battles of old—Peleliu and Iwo Jima. He knew better than to trust a battlefield left conveniently empty. Vance held his troops back and ordered them into cover just below the summit. He scanned the ridgeline from his position, searching for movement for anything out of place.

Emboldened by their lack of resistance, the rest of the company burst on top of Hill 34, only for the Jem'hadar, who had hidden within underground bunkers, to emerge, the purple beams of their polaron rifles cutting through the early morning fog. Dozens of Starfleet soldiers fell in the initial volley unprotected. It would have been a slaughter had not for 3rd Platoon returning fire.

Despite the chaos erupting around him, Vance acted without hesitation. As Jem'Hadar fire raked through Delta Company's ranks, he darted from cover, dragging the wounded to safety while polaron beams slashed through the air. With the company commander and executive officer both killed in the initial assault, command had fallen to him. Rallying the remaining troops, he organized a retreat to a more defensible position along the ridgeline, using the terrain to their advantage.

Recognizing the risk of encirclement, Vance swiftly repositioned 2nd Platoon, ordering them into a flanking maneuver to counter any Jem'Hadar attempts to outmaneuver their line. Under relentless fire, Delta Company held its ground, fighting through the long hours of the day as casualties mounted and supplies dwindled. The brutal engagement tested the limits of their endurance, but Vance's leadership and tactical awareness prevented the complete collapse of the unit.

As dusk approached, reinforcements from Alpha and Charlie Companies arrived, finally allowing Starfleet forces to dislodge the entrenched Jem'Hadar. When the fighting subsided, Hill 34 lay in Starfleet's hands—an unremarkable patch of scorched earth won at a terrible cost.

For Vance, the battle was a defining moment in his career. He had survived and proven himself as a capable leader under fire, earning the trust and respect of those who fought alongside him. After the brutal engagement, the 15th Regiment was pulled from the front lines to regroup and recover. However, their respite was brief. A month later, Talus V fell to the Dominion, forcing Starfleet to abandon the planet. Delta Company and the rest of the regiment were redeployed, taking up a new defensive position at Outpost Delta-9, another frontline station besieged by a fearsome enemy.

#### <h4>Outpost Delta-9</h4>

Founded in 2267, Outpost Delta-9 began as a human colony, capitalizing on its rich pergium and tritanium deposits. Initially geologically stable, the decades of mining upended the planet's tectonic balance. The resulting seismic activity created frequent earthquakes and violent volcanic eruptions, spewing toxic gases into the atmosphere and rendering the planet nearly uninhabitable. Over time, most settlers abandoned the Delta-9, although a few thousand determined miners remained, continuing to extract valuable resources despite the growing dangers.

When the Dominion War erupted across the quadrant, Delta-9's proximity to the Talarian Corridor, a narrow passage between the Cardassian Union and the Talarian Republic, made it a strategic location. In early 2374, the Starfleet Corps of Engineers arrived and constructed an observation and listening post to monitor enemy fleet movements. Coveted by both sides, Delta-9 quickly became a contested battleground.

After the fall of Talus V, Xavier Vance, and Delta Company were reassigned to Outpost Delta-9, tasked with holding the pergium mine near the small village of Helen's Grove. Skirmishes with Jem'Hadar and Cardassian ground forces were frequent, keeping the unit in a constant state of alert. Despite the dangers, Vance experienced a rare luxury: sleeping in a real bed each night and eating hot, replicated meals three times a day—a stark contrast to the grueling conditions he had endured on the front lines.

In December, as the Bloody Year of 2374 drew to a close, a tragic late-night raid claimed the life of the company XO. In the aftermath, Vance was promoted to Executive Officer and took command of 1st Platoon.

In early 2375, Delta Company was ordered to abandon Helen's Grove, relocating to a series of hastily dug foxholes and trenches overlooking a key mountain pass. The pass was the last natural barrier between Dominion-held territory and the remaining Federation-controlled zones on Delta-9. Holding the pass meant controlling movement through the region, making it a prime target for Dominion assaults.

The Battle of Hawkins Pass raged for three grueling months, claiming lives on both sides in a relentless cycle of artillery barrages, trench raids, and brutal hand-to-hand combat. The relative comfort of Vance's early days on Delta-9 with a bed to sleep in and hot replicated meals had become a distant memory, replaced by the gritty reality of "The Pass." Mud-soaked uniforms, cold, hard ground, and Starfleet rations were all Delta Company had to look forward to.

Day after day, night after night, the next attack hung around their necks like a noose. Most endured, but a few; despite their training, they broke from the hellish reality they found themselves in. Vance would discover crewmen curled in their foxholes, shaking and muttering, hollow-eyed from the sleepless nights and constant threat of death. Others took more desperate measures—self-inflicted wounds, like a phaser shot to the foot, anything to escape from the unrelenting horrors of war.

But there was no escape. Hawkins Pass had to hold.

After three grueling months on the front lines, now Lieutenant (jg) Xavier Vance led a patrol into Dominion-held territory to gather intelligence. The patrol was uneventful until they were nearly back within their own lines. Vance inadvertently led his team into a Houdini Mine in a rare

moment of lowered vigilance. The explosion tore through the patrol, killing three soldiers and severely injuring Vance.

Medics on Delta-9 stabilized Vance before transferring him to a medical ship bound for Starbase 21. En route to the starbase, Vance's heart stopped three times. Upon arrival at Starbase 21, the medical team had no choice but to amputate his left arm and leg. Additionally, shrapnel had severely damaged his lungs, necessitating bio-synthetic replacements.

Vance spent the next four months in rehabilitation, adapting to his prosthetic limbs and undergoing extensive physical therapy. Despite chronic pain and the challenges of recovery, he was determined to return to active duty. By late 2375, he had regained operational readiness and rejoined Starfleet in time for the Second Battle of Chin'toka.

#### USS *Keogh*

While Vance was recovering on Starbase 21, Delta-9 fell to the Dominion. His old regiment had suffered such high casualties that it was disbanded, with the surviving members absorbed into other units. In mid-2375, now a full Lieutenant, he was assigned to the USS *Keogh*, an aging Miranda-class starship, as the Chief Tactical Officer.

The transition from frontline ground combat to space combat was a difficult adjustment. Vance was haunted by his survival when so many others did not. He felt guilty for enjoying the relative luxury of the starship while his friends were fighting and dying in the mud, but his injuries had made that life impossible. He rarely slept, and when he did, he would wake up at night screaming into the darkness, sometimes in a pile on the floor, his blankets wrapped around him, heart racing.

He refused dermal regeneration for a scar on his face, a wound that could have been erased in seconds. When questioned, he dismissed it as unimportant, but in truth, it was a reminder—one he refused to let go of. A lesson in blood and pain: never let your guard down. Some of the crew whispered about it, but no one asked.

He never said anything to anyone. He didn't want to appear weak, and he started to resort to various pharmaceutical means to calm his mind and ensure dreamless nights. One of the Ferengi, Drok, who worked as a waiter in Quark's bar on Deep Space Nine, provided him with the illegal drugs.

Vance hid his deteriorating mental state behind work. He drilled the officers under him like a drill instructor, preparing them for trench warfare that they would never see. They resented him for this, yet *Keogh's* security department became one of the best in the fleet.

However, his service on the ship was short-lived. The *Keogh* was one of many ships in the Federation fleet at the Second Battle of Chin'toka. Like almost all Alliance ships at Chin'toka, the *Keogh* was disabled by the Breen energy-dampening weapon. Vance helped lead evacuation efforts as the ship was torn apart by enemy fire. He jettisoned his escape pod at the last moment, just before the warp core went critical, tearing the ship apart.

The USS *Somme* rescued Vance three days later, and he and many of the *Keogh's* crew were transported back to Earth. After a debriefing, they were all split up, and Vance was reassigned to the USS *Saint-Mihiel*. Vance spent the rest of the war with the 1st Fleet, protecting Earth from future attacks that never came.

#### USS *Saint-Mihiel*

Unlike the *Keogh*, the Centaur-class USS *Saint-Mihiel* was a combat vessel far from the frontlines. Its days were filled with patrols, readiness drills, and the constant anticipation of an attack that never came. For Vance, the shift from brutal, immediate survival to the tense quiet of home defense felt unnatural. With no end to the war in sight, a different fear crept in: the fear of being left alone with his thoughts.

He was close enough to Earth to visit home for the first time since the Battle of Hawkins Pass. His mother, who had never approved of his decision to join Starfleet, was the one to break through his hardened exterior. Through his forced stoicism, she saw how he carried himself like a man still in the trenches. She refused to let him brush off his pain, and after one brutal conversation, he admitted haltingly, bitterly, to what he had become.

Forced to confront his drug use and the demons clawing at his mind, Vance sought out a private counselor in Colorado. It was a long and challenging process, but little by little, he began to unearth the buried trauma, to work through the nightmares rather than suppress them. Eventually, he confided in his captain and the *Saint-Mihiel's* Chief Medical Officer. Instead of reprimanding him, they helped him find a path forward. The CMO still prescribed a sleep aid, but this time, they monitored it, and there were no more illicit dealings in the shadows. His mental state slowly improved, but he would never be the same. War had taken a piece of his humanity—his innocence.

He was on the bridge when the Alpha Quadrant Alliance and the Dominion peace treaty was signed. The moment the transmission came through, he fell to his knees, unable to hold back the flood of emotions. It was over. This war had taken so much from Vance: his friends, youth, and literal pieces of himself. It had nearly consumed him, and even now, as relief set in, the weight of everything it had cost refused to lift. As he sat on the deck, gasping for breath with tears streaking down his cheeks, he couldn't ignore the scars, both seen and unseen. These were trophies no one ever wanted to win for surviving the horrors of war.

### Post War

Lieutenant Xavier Vance served aboard the USS *Saint-Mihiel* for another year, a period marked more by diplomacy than conflict. The ship, assigned to the First Fleet, primarily conducted follow-up missions with newly contacted civilizations—what Starfleet informally referred to as "second contact." These missions ranged from assisting local governments in stabilizing post-contact relations to overseeing trade negotiations and ensuring Starfleet's initial promises were upheld. While far less dangerous than wartime service, the work required patience, adaptability, and a keen understanding of interstellar politics.

The *Saint-Mihiel's* assignment to the First Fleet meant frequent returns to Earth, allowing Vance time away from deep-space postings. During one such leave, he reconnected with Malinda Davis, an old flame from his Academy days. What began as a chance meeting quickly rekindled the bond they had once shared.

By 2376, Malinda made a life-changing decision, transferring to the USS *Saint-Mihiel* as its chief science officer to be closer to Vance. Their bond only strengthened, flourishing amidst the tedium of a ship that did little for their careers. In early 2377, they were married in a small ceremony on Vance's parent's Texarkana farm, surrounded by friends and family.

### Starbase 198

By 2377, Xavier Vance's career was on the rise. With their first child on the way, he was promoted to lieutenant commander and reassigned to Starbase 198 as strategic operations officer. T

his assignment was a crucial step toward starship command, giving him the needed command experience.

However, for Malinda, this would prove to be a significant sacrifice. It meant resigning her role as chief science officer aboard the *Saint-Mihiel* to take a more limited position as head of Archaeology and Anthropology on SB198. Officially, it was her choice. S

tarfleet hadn't forced her to transfer, but the reality was that family came first.

She had never been one to dwell on rank, but she felt the difference immediately. On the *Saint-Mihiel*, she ran staff meetings, set research priorities, and liaised directly with the captain. On SB198, she was one voice among many. The first time she submitted a research proposal, she received it back with a note from the chief science officer, her new boss, asking her to "refine the scope to align with the station's priorities."

She didn't respond immediately; she stared at the message until the screen dimmed from inactivity. On the *Saint-Mihiel*, she set the department's priorities. Now, she had to ask permission.

At first, she tried to brush off her misgivings. Orders were orders, right? But deep down, she knew her husband could have refused the promotion. She had to sacrifice her ambition and career for the family, and there had been little discussion. Vance just expected her to come with him and be the dutiful wife.

As the months passed, the resentment gnawed at her; Vance had gained a promotion, and she had taken a demotion. And the worst part? He didn't

seem to notice. On the surface, life on SB198 was peaceful. The Gorn and Tholians remained distant, and Vance saw the posting as an opportunity. But within their quarters, tensions simmered, unspoken but undeniable.

With the birth of their son Aiden in November 2377, the couple settled into family life, embracing the challenges and joys of parenthood. The presence of their child brought a sense of stability, easing tensions that had lingered between them. As they adjusted to their new roles, their bond deepened, and before long, Malinda was expecting again. Their growing family became the heart of their shared journey. However, beneath the surface, this newfound stability only masked Malinda's resentment toward Vance.

**By** 2384, as the Romulan Empire descended into chaos and the Federation was divided over handling the refugee crisis sparked by the impending supernova, the Vance household was no less fractured. The simmering resentment between Xavier and Malinda finally came to a head when she was passed over for the open Chief Science Officer position, a blow she could neither forgive nor forget. What had once been unspoken tension had become an open conflict.

Their fights became public knowledge, with heated arguments spilling beyond closed doors. More than once, security officers had been called to their quarters. Neither could ignore that embarrassment. Vance, a master on the battlefield, found himself utterly unarmed when it came to the battles within his own home. His tactical mind, adept at anticipating enemy movements, failed him in the face of Malinda's disappointment, anger, and the growing divide between them.

By August of 2384, the breaking point had arrived. Malinda requested a transfer to the USS *Effingham* to lead its Anthropology department, a fresh start far from the wreckage of their marriage. She took Aiden and Maeve with her, leaving Vance with nothing but the silence of an empty home and the weight of a war he hadn't been trained to fight.

Left with little reason to stay, Vance buried himself in duty. When an opening for the first officer aboard the USS *Ehrenfest* became available,

he took it without hesitation. It was a new challenge, a way to outrun the ghosts of his failed marriage.

### USS *Ehrenfest*

With little reason to stay, Vance buried himself in duty. He took it without hesitation when an opening for the first officer aboard the *USS Ehrenfest* became available. The *Ehrenfest*, a Sovereign-class vessel, was embarking on a seven-year deep-space mission into the Gamma Quadrant under Captain Elara Vos. This mission was far removed from the Federation's core worlds, removed from the reminders of his failure. Vance's divorce was finalized on the day the ship departed Deep Space Nine for the Gamma Quadrant.

Nine years after the Dominion War, Starfleet turned its attention back to the Gamma Quadrant. While Odo's return to the Great Link offered hope, few believed the Founders had truly changed. The Dominion was still a threat. Starfleet needed to know if they were rebuilding. Was there a lingering threat now or into the future?

But Starfleet's prime directive remained: to explore strange new worlds; to seek out new life and new civilizations. The quadrant was rich with uncharted stars and potential allies. Yet, despite this hopeful mission, there was a hard truth at its core. This mission wasn't just exploration; it was vigilance, a steady thumb on the pulse of a deadly foe.

Vance, however, took on a new role as if he were a fish in water. While the duties were vastly different from any of his past assignments, the leadership aspects of the job weren't too different from those of a Platoon Ensign.

He still scanned a room for exits and measured people by their ability to stay calm under pressure. The camaraderie aboard the *Ehrenfest* was genuine, and for the first time in years, he found himself laughing, joking, and enjoying the routine of shipboard life.

He felt at home among a crew for the first time in years. The Friday night poker games with the senior staff became a tradition—a reminder that command didn't have to be lonely. In the gym, he sparred with junior officers, pushing them, testing them, and keeping himself sharp. But more than that, it was a way to quiet his mind.

Because the moment the noise stopped, the thoughts crept in. The *Effingham*. Aiden and Maeve. The children he barely knew anymore, growing up light-years away.

After four years of countless first contacts and exploring hundreds of star systems, Captain Vos promoted Xavier Vance to full commander. The rank changed nothing, but he accepted the gesture with quiet appreciation. It was another step forward, bringing him closer to his ultimate goal.

After seven years in the Gamma Quadrant, it was time to return home. The mission had run its course—seven years of exploration, diplomacy, and vigilance in a region still shadowed by the Dominion. The *Ehrenfest* had ventured farther than most Starfleet vessels, pushing the boundaries of known space while keeping a wary eye on old threats.

For Vance, the end of the mission was inevitable, but that didn't mean it was easy. He had built a life aboard the *Ehrenfest*, found purpose in its journey, and felt at home among a crew for the first time in years. But as the ship set course for the Alpha Quadrant, a lingering thought settled in his mind. What waited for him on the other side?

Returning from deep space in 2391, Vance transferred to the USS *Salinas*, a California-class starship, continuing his career as a first officer. The *Salinas* was a step down from the pride of the fleet, the Sovereign class, but it offered something far more critical—proximity. Based out of Starbase 21, where his ex-wife Malinda served as station commander, it allowed him to reconnect with his children after years of distance.

Though *Salinas* lacked the prestige of his previous assignments, Vance embraced the role. It was a smaller ship with a tighter crew and a different pace than the high-profile deep-space operations. He was already familiar with the work, as the vessel served many of the same roles as his old ship, the USS *Saint-Maihil*. Though second contacts were rarer now, he enjoyed them when they happened.

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But despite the quieter life aboard the *Salinas* and the time he cherished with his children, Vance couldn't shake the itch to do more. He had always been a man of action, driven by a need to serve on the front lines of history. Though he had learned patience, he knew he couldn't stay on the sidelines forever. He bided his time, waiting for the right opportunity, the perfect assignment that would challenge him and keep him in his kid's life. When it came, he seized it without hesitation. The USS *Loveland* was that opportunity.

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<h3>USS *Loveland*</h3>

When Xavier Vance took command of the Akira-class USS *Loveland*, he found himself in an ideal position—close enough to Starbase

21 to remain a presence in his children's lives while leading a ship at the heart of regional security along the Cardassian and Tholian borders. It was the perfect balance of responsibility, action, and family, all within reach.

The *Loveland* quickly became one of the most active ships in the region. Vance set a high bar for tactical readiness but knew diplomacy was just as important. His wartime experience made him decisive under pressure and bold but never reckless. His first major challenge came when a rogue Cardassian splinter group, the True Way, attempted destabilizing Federation-Cardassian relations. Through swift tactical responses and careful negotiation, Vance helped prevent a more significant conflict while exposing hidden True Way operatives in a Cardassian colony.

By 2396, the Tholians had grown increasingly aggressive in their territorial claims, particularly near the contested regions of the Azure Nebula. Vance led several tense standoffs with Tholian vessels. He masterfully navigated these events with diplomacy and aggression, preventing open war. He always prepared to fight but was never the one to start it.

In early 2397, the *Loveland* was among the first vessels to respond to a distress call from the Cardassian colony of Telva III, where an unexpected plasma storm had struck. Coordinating with Cardassian forces, Vance and his crews worked tirelessly to evacuate the colony. This cooperative effort saved thousands of lives and earned the appreciation of the Cardassian government. Because of his actions, he earned commendations from Starfleet and the Detapa Council.

The center seat was hard and lonely, with extended hours and constant demands keeping him away from his children, who had grown into teenagers and were preparing to leave for Starfleet Academy. His relationship with Malinda remained cordial but distant. He leaned on his crew for camaraderie, particularly his first officer, Commander Elias Rourke. He was a pragmatic strategist with a dry wit who often served as Vance's sounding board under challenging situations. Vance also developed a bond with his chief engineer, Lieutenant Commander Elizabeth Kyle, who delighted in challenging him while mentoring Ensign Shawn Taylor, who

was under her command. That mentoring had resulted in a three-month tumultuous relationship that had exploded worse than Vance's'.</span>

<span data-preserve-spaces="true">By 2399, reports of Breen activity along the Tholian border put the region on edge. The Loveland routinely patrolled the area, monitoring Breen's activity and attempting to ease tensions through diplomacy. In mid-2400, what began as a routine mission turned into a vicious ambush. </span><span data-preserve-spaces="true">The Breen attacked without warning, forcing Vance and his crew into a fierce battle that tested their skill, resilience, and resolve. The Loveland took heavy damage, but through grit and strategy, they fought off the attackers and limped back to Federation space.</span>

<span data-preserve-spaces="true">The </span><em><span data-preserve-spaces="true">Loveland</span></em><span data-preserve-spaces="true"> also played a key role in a multi-fleet effort to disrupt an emerging Orion Syndicate smuggling ring exploiting trade routes between Cardassian and Tholian space. Vance led a joint task force that uncovered and dismantled a major Syndicate outpost in the Hekaros Corridor, dealing a significant blow to their regional operations.</span>

### <h3>USS <em>Valhalla</em></h3>

In 2402, Captain <a href="https://bravofleet.com/character/34403/"><span style="color: #3366ff;">Aoife MacKenzie</span></a> stepped away from Starfleet to marry her executive officer. Recognizing his extensive experience, Starfleet offered Vance command of the Valhalla, placing him at the head of <a href="https://wiki.bravofleet.com/index.php?title=Valhalla\_Division"><span style="color: #3366ff;">Valhalla Division</span></a>, a two-ship task force that included the USS Sentinel.

<p data-start="4176" data-end="4536">One of his first acts as commanding officer was to bring Commander <span style="margin: 0px; padding: 0px; color: #3366ff;"><a style="color: #3366ff;" href="https://bravofleet.com/character/43808/" target="\_blank" rel="noopener">Elizabeth Kyle</a></span> aboard as his first officer, a decision that reflected his deep trust in her leadership abilities. Leading two ships demanded a strategic mindset and the ability to coordinate multi-ship operations effectively, a challenge Vance met with characteristic pragmatism.</p>

<p data-start="4538" data-end="4793">With the Valhalla and Sentinel under his command, Vance entered a new phase of leadership. He balanced the responsibilities of overseeing multiple ships while continuing to navigate the evolving political landscape of the post-war Federation.</p>