

To Boldly Go: No Peace for the Warrior

A U.S.S. *Providence* story

By Cleve Johnson

Prologue

The U.S.S. *Nairobi*, an *Excelsior*-class starship, had recently returned from the Gamma Quadrant and her crew was enjoying a respite at Deep Space Nine. Captain Julia Thomas was proud of her crew for the way that they conducted themselves during the war and, finally, in peace. The task of transporting a Vorta ambassador so soon after blood had been shed between the Federation and the Dominion could not be easy for her crew and she wanted to reward them with a few days of R and R.

A middle-aged man approached Thomas. “The Ambassador has been delivered to OPS,” he said. “Colonel Kira can have the pleasure of working with her,” he added sarcastically.

Thomas shot the man a disapproving look. “The war is over, Jack,” she scolded.

“It may be over,” Commander Jack Miller said, “but some of us have a lot of bad feelings.”

Thomas started walking, Miller right beside his commanding officer. “And you have kept those feelings in check very well,” she said. “At least in the presence of the Vorta.”

“It’s not been easy,” he replied.

“That’s why we’re taking some time off,” the captain of the starship *Nairobi* said cheerfully. “I’ll buy you a drink.”

The two officers entered Quark’s to forget about the rest of the galaxy, at least for a few hours.



Captain’s Log: Stardate 52997.3

We have completed our relief mission to deliver much-needed food and medical supplies to Cardassia in an effort to help Prime Minister Garak rebuild his war-torn world. The crew and I are becoming more acquainted with each other and with the ship. I am hopeful that we will be given a deep-space assignment into unknown regions soon; however, I realize that we are needed to aid in the rebuilding process that comes after a war.

The Starbright Lounge served as the main social center onboard the starship *Providence*. On this particular evening, the gathering of people seemed to fill the room to capacity.

Captain Rob Stuart contemplated his next move as Doctor Edwards placed her rook on the Queen’s level. “Interesting move,” he said as he carefully surveyed all the pieces on the multi-layered chessboard.

“I thought you might find it challenging,” the doctor replied.

Stuart began to reach for one of his knights but moved his hand back to take another look at the board. “You’re quite good, Doctor,” he said, his face barely hinting at the tension that he was beginning to feel.

“Thank you, Captain,” she replied, not able to suppress her pleasure at putting pressure on her CO. “You need to relax, Sir,” she teased. “After all, it’s just a game.”

“If it’s just a game,” he asked, “why are you being so ruthless at it?”

“Me?” the doctor asked in her most coy expression.

Stuart just smiled as he concentrated on the board. “I’ll have the advantage in four moves,” he stated while moving his queen. “Do you want to conce...”

“*Bridge to captain,*” the voice from the intercom interrupted.

Stuart tapped his combadge. “Go ahead Blake,” he replied.

“*We’re receiving a distress call, Skipper.*”

“Distress call? From where?” Stuart asked.

“*Three point seven light years from here.*” Blake Adams informed his CO. “*One of our medical relief ships is under attack.*”

Stuart rose from his chair and walked briskly to the nearest exit. “On my way.”

Chapter 1

Lieutenant Commander Blake Adams arose from the command chair as Stuart exited the turbolift. He faced his captain and long-time comrade. “It’s the *Nobel*,” he said. “They say that they are under attack by a Jem’Hedar fighter.”

Stuart could not believe what he just heard. “Jem’Hedar?”

“They’ve broken the truce,” Lieutenant Yoshi Nakamura blurted out.

“Don’t jump to conclusions, Lieutenant,” Stuart warned. “Set course for the *Nobel*’s position and engage at maximum warp.”

“Aye Sir,” the young pilot said.

And the U.S.S. *Providence* sped through space toward whatever its crew might encounter.



Captain’s Log: Supplemental.

The U.S.S. Nobel was badly damaged by a single Jem’Hedar warship. Apparently, it is a renegade. Many lives were lost, and those who survived are being treated in our sickbay. I am on my way to speak with the Nobel’s captain who is recovering from plasma burns in ICU.

Captain Stuart strolled into Sickbay. “Where is Captain Tanaka?” he asked a passing nurse.

“He’s in ICU, Sir,” she said. “Doctor Edwards is with him.”

“Thank you.” Stuart went to the intensive care unit and placed his hand on Edwards’ shoulder to get her attention.

“He’s in serious condition, but stable,” she said. “I think that he’ll recover in time.”

“Can I speak with him?” Stuart asked.

“He needs to rest, but a few minutes should be okay,” the doctor said.

Stuart watched as Edwards walked into the medical ward to check on other patients. Stuart looked back to the captain of the ill-fated medical ship. “I’m Rob Stuart of the *Providence*,” he began. “Can you tell me what happened?”

Captain Tanaka turned his head toward Stuart. Opening his dark eyelids, Tanaka tried to force a smile. “Harrison Tanaka,” he said slowly. “The Jem’Hedar surprised us.” Tanaka struggled to speak, but being a starship captain, he knew that Stuart needed to know what happened. “I thought they went back to the Gamma Quadrant.”

“As did all of us,” Stuart said. “Do you know what course they set?”

“Sensors were destroyed,” Tanaka softly said. “Your arrival must have scared them off.”

“Rest now, Captain,” Stuart said. “I’ll check on you later.”

Stuart left ICU and went to the reception area where Commander Melanie Leeson waited for him. “Where is Doctor Edwards?”

“She’s in Holodeck Two,” Leeson said. She’s turned it into an emergency triage center.”

It must be bad,” the captain stated. “What’s the count, Exec?”

Leeson sighed. “We found seventy-one of the *Nobel*’s crew alive,” she said. “Forty-nine of them have serious injuries.”

“Have they all been transported?” Stuart wanted to know.

“All but the chief engineer and three of her crew who were not seriously injured.”

“How bad’s the ship?”

Leeson stood momentarily silent. “They will probably decommission her,” she finally said.

Stuart looked down at the floor. “Don’t tell Tanaka.”

“Yes, Sir.” Leeson had hoped the Dominion threat was over, but recent events proved that an armed conflict still hung over the Alpha Quadrant. And the Federation.

Stuart walked out of Sickbay into the corridor with his first officer right behind him. “Arrange for the *Nobel* to be towed and provide quarters for our guests.”

“Already done, Sir,” the commander said proudly.

Stuart knew that his executive officer had a record of getting things done. He now could see first-hand that her record was well deserved.

“I also had Lieutenant Salesch assign an engineering team to assist Commander McGregor on the *Nobel*.”

“Good work, Exec. I’m going to contact Starfleet to inform them of what happened,” he said as they walked toward a turbolift. “I think that they will send us on a hunting mission once a tug picks up the *Nobel*.”

The captain and first officer of the starship *Providence* entered the lift and they were on their way to the bridge.

Chapter 2

Rob Stuart sat behind the desk in his ready room, staring out the viewport. He desperately wanted to get out the unknown, to make discoveries, to make first contact with new species. It appeared that the aftermath of the war might prevent him from ever fulfilling his desire to explore the outer reaches of space.

Stuart pressed the com panel on his desk. "Stuart to bridge."

"Go ahead Captain," Melanie Leeson's voice replied.

"I'd like to see you, Exec," he said.

"On my way."

Within moments the second-in-command of the U.S.S. *Providence* walked into her captain's place of solitude. "Commander Leeson reporting as ordered, Sir," she said.

"At ease Exec," Stuart said. "Haven't you learned that I prefer informality whenever possible?"

Leeson relaxed and sat down across from her CO. "Sorry, Sir." She paused. "I've been a security officer for most of my career," she said. "I guess I'm just used to being formal."

"I understand," Stuart said. "Old habits are hard to break."

"That's true," Leeson replied.

Stuart rose from his seat and went toward the replicator. "Can I get you anything?"

"No thank you," Leeson said. She surveyed her captain as he asked the computer for hot cinnamon tea. "Is there something on your mind, Captain?"

Stuart sat down behind his desk again. "I want to put this war behind us and move forward," he said. "But with a renegade Dominion ship in the quadrant..."

"You don't think that Starfleet will be on the forefront of exploration as it once was?" Leeson asked.

"It's not that," he said. "I've always wanted to be in Starfleet and explore the unknown." Stuart sighed heavily before finishing his thought. "It just seems so far away."

Melanie Leeson felt sorry for Stuart, wishing that she could say something that might make him feel better. Then the intercom chirped.

"*Bridge to Captain Stuart,*" Lieutenant Mary Goodman's voice said.

"Stuart here."

"*Message coming in from Starfleet, Sir.*"

"I'll take it in here."

The viewscreen came to life, revealing the image of Admiral Ross.

"Admiral Ross, it's good to hear from you," Stuart said.

"*I wish that the circumstances were better,*" the admiral replied.

"As do I, Sir." Stuart leaned forward to the viewer. "What are our orders?"

“The starship Nairobi will rendezvous with you in about two hours to stand watch over the Nobel. The Nobel’s survivors will be transported to the Nairobi and you will be taking on a passenger.”

“A passenger?” Stuart inquired.

“An ambassador from the Dominion.” Admiral Ross said. “A Vorta who may be helpful in stopping the Jem’Hedar.”

“Then they are renegades working without the Dominion’s approval.”

“Her name is Kilana,” Ross continued. “And she has Odo’s full confidence.”

Stuart stared at the viewscreen for a few moments. “What if Kilana can’t convince the Jem’Hedar to surrender?”

“Then you are to stop them by any means at your disposal.”

“Understood Admiral.”

“Good luck Captain.”

The image of Admiral Ross faded as Stuart leaned back in his chair. He glanced at his first officer.

“The crew will probably be uncomfortable with a Vorta on board,” Leeson said.

“Maybe,” Stuart replied. “Most of our crew were not on the front lines hopefully will not have hard feelings toward a former enemy.”

Leeson arose from her chair. “With your permission, I’ll have the presidential suite prepared.”

“By all means,” Stuart said. “We want our guest to be comfortable with us even if some of the crew might not be comfortable with her.”

“Yes Sir,” Leeson said as turned and left her captain to be alone with his dreams of exploring the unknown.

Chapter 3

Blake Adams hurried through the corridor to catch up with his friend and captain. Like the senior officer, Adams wore his dress white uniform to meet the Vorta representative whom, hopefully, would bring a final retreat to the Jem’Hedar.

Stuart looked at Adams, who was still trying to straighten out the creases in his uniform. “You clean up pretty well,” he teasingly said to his friend.

“You know how much I enjoy diplomatic functions, Skipper,” Adams said with mock sarcasm. “You would think that they could at least design a dress uniform that would be more comfortable.”

Stuart just laughed as the two entered the transporter room where Commander Leeson and Lieutenant Nakamara waited.

“Are we ready for this, Exec?” Stuart inquired of his first officer.

“The *Nairobi* has signaled that they are waiting for transport,” Leeson said.

“Let’s not keep them waiting any longer then,” he said. “At your convenience, Chief,” Stuart nodded to the woman at the transporter controls.

“Energizing,” the Chief said.

Two people materialized on the transporter platform. One, Captain Thomas of the U.S.S. *Nairobi*. The second, a female Vorta.

Stuart approached the Vorta, stretching out his hand. “Welcome aboard Ambassador,” he said, shaking her hand. “I’m Captain Robert P. Stuart. And welcome to you as well, Captain Thomas.”

“Thank you, Captain,” the Vorta replied.

Stuart led the two women down from the platform. “I would like to introduce my first officer --Commander Melanie Leeson, second officer --Lieutenant Commander Blake Adams, and Lieutenant Yoshi Nakamara my chief of security.”

“A pleasure,” the ambassador said. “I hope to be able to assist you with destroying the Jem’Hedar, Captain.”

Stuart did not like the Vorta’s choice of terms. “Destroying?”

“Of course, Captain,” Kilana said. “You don’t think that they will give you any other choice but to destroy them?”

“I was hoping that we could convince them to return to Dominion space,” Stuart said.

Kilana only smiled, incredulous at the naiveté of humans. “You must understand, Captain, that these are Jem’Hedar. They have been bred for centuries to fight.”

“Haven’t they also been bred to obey the Founders wishes?” Leeson asked coldly.

“Yes Commander,” Kilana said just as coldly. “But obviously they have disobeyed the wishes of the Founders by continuing attacks upon the Federation.”

Stuart did not want to allow this conversation to erupt into an argument, so he motioned the Vorta toward the doorway. “Perhaps we can continue this discussion after you have settled in Ambassador.”

“I would prefer to get started on a plan to lure the Jem’Hedar out of hiding as soon as possible,” the ambassador said.

“Of course, Ambassador,” Stuart replied. “However, we need to transport our engineering team back from the *Nobel* and give charge of the survivors to Captain Thomas before we decide how to deal with the Jem’Hedar.”

“I completely understand your priorities, Captain.”

“We will meet at 1400 hours in the main conference room to plan our strategy.”

“I will see you at 1400 hours then,” Kilana reluctantly replied.

“I will escort you to guest quarters, Ambassador,” Lieutenant Nakamara said as he led her toward the nearest turbolift.

“Charming, isn’t she?” Captain Thomas said smugly after Nakamara and Kilana entered the lift.

“She doesn’t appear to be willing to try alternatives to killing the Jem’Hedar,” Stuart said, turning toward Thomas and his two senior officers.

Thomas chuckled. “I’m not going to pretend that I like the Vorta,” she said. “But I do agree with her solution.”

“We have an opportunity to end this peacefully, without further bloodshed and you think that we should murder the Jem’Hedar?” Stuart asked.

“They killed over three hundred people on the *Nobel* after a truce was negotiated, Captain,” Thomas said angrily. “They deserve to be hunted down and destroyed.”

Stuart glared at his counterpart from the *Nairobi*. “Starfleet is not about revenge, Captain,” he pointed out. “Perhaps you have forgotten that we are to seek out new life and conduct peaceful relations.”

Captain Thomas turned and reentered the transporter room. As she stepped up to the platform she glared at Stuart. “Sometimes those we contact aren’t interested in peace.”

Stuart said nothing as Thomas dematerialized and returned to her ship.

“That went well, Blake Adams, who had been silent up to this point, stated nonchalantly.

Stuart did not reply but walked toward the turbolift.

Chapter 4

Stuart entered the bridge, not looking forward to the meeting that would take place with the Vorta ambassador within the next few minutes.

“Captain on the bridge,” Commander Leeson said.

“Report,” Stuart said.

“All but four of the *Nobel*’s crew have been beamed to the starship *Nairobi*,” Leeson said. “Doctor Edwards won’t allow Captain Tanaka and three others to be moved until their condition is more stable.”

“Anything else?” Stuart asked.

“Lieutenant Salesh and his team have returned, so we’re ready to get underway.”

Stuart tried to feign a grin. “When we know where to go, then we’ll get underway.”

Blake Adams turned from his flight control console. “Skipper?”

“Yes, Blake?”

“I owe you an apology,” Adams said.

Stuart smiled at his friend. “What for?”

“The comment that I made outside the transporter room was not very sensitive to the situation,” he said remorsefully.

Stuart walked down the steps and placed a hand on Adams’ shoulder. “I know you well enough to not be offended by your off the cuff remarks.”

Blake turned to look at the first officer. “I told you it didn’t bother him,” he said, then turned back to his console.

Stuart stepped back up to the command platform as he noticed Lieutenant Nakamara and Ambassador Kilana step out of the turbolift. “Ah, Ambassador. I see that you are very punctual.”

“I try to be, Captain,” the Vorta replied. “I trust that we are ready to begin our planning?”

“Certainly, Ambassador,” Stuart replied. “Blake, you have the bridge. Exec, you and Mister Nakamara are with the Ambassador and me.”

The Vorta and three humans entered the conference room to begin planning how to stop a ship full of renegade Jem’Hedar soldiers.



Julia Thomas stepped onto the bridge of her ship and sat down in the center seat, just vacated by her executive officer. “Prepare to take the NOBEL in tow,” she said.

Jack Miller had been Thomas’ first officer for two years. He had given up a chance at his own command just to serve with her. He had come to know the moods of his CO almost better than his own and he knew that something bothered her now. “Is something wrong?” he asked.

Thomas did not say anything.

“Want to talk about it?”

“Later,” she replied. “Right now, let’s get back to Federation space.”

“Aye Sir,” Miller agreed. “Ensign Reshva, set course zero three three mark seven,” Miller said to the young Bolian flight officer. “OPS, activate tractor beam.”

The officer manning OPS locked onto the U.S.S. *Nobel* and engaged the tractor. “Tractor beam activated, Sir,” the officer replied.

Thomas looked at the viewscreen, seeing the *Providence* beside the *Nobel*. She felt sorry for the way that she talked to Captain Rob Stuart and hoped to make it up to him. “Set speed at warp factor 3,” she said. “Enga...”

“Captain, there’s a Jem’Hedar fighter coming out of warp directly behind us!” the tactical officer exclaimed.

Thomas practically jumped out of her command chair. “Disengage tractor beam! Shields up, arm weapons.”

Chapter 5

Kilana would not change her position. She only saw one way for this to end, and that meant destroying the Jem’Hedar.

“Surely there is a way to get them back to your side of the galaxy without killing them,” Stuart insisted.

“As I told you, Captain, the Jem’Hedar have been bred to be soldiers,” the Vorta said. “And they cannot be persuaded to go against their programmed instincts.”

“No peace for the warrior,” Leeson remarked.

“That’s correct, Commander,” Kilana said.

Stuart wanted to find a solution that would allow the Jem'Hedar to live, but he was beginning to see the ambassador's point of view. "What do you suggest, Ambassador?"

"We need to draw them out," she said. "Then we can..."

The room shook violently, interrupting Kilana and nearly knocking her to the floor.

"*Captain to the bridge!*" Blake Adam's voice came loudly over the intercom.



Stuart and Leeson rushed onto the bridge, taking their respective chairs on the command platform. Nakamara ran to the tactical station next to CONN and relieved the ensign that had been manning it. Kilana stood behind Stuart.

"Blake," Stuart said. "I need a status report."

"Our shields are holding, Skipper," he replied. "But the *Nairobi* took a hit near their bridge before they could raise shields."

"Where's the *Nobel*?"

"Destroyed, Captain," Blake said, his voice lowering. "Along with her chief engineer and three others that were on board."

Stuart stared at the viewscreen, watching the Dominion fighter come toward them. "Hail them."

Lieutenant Nakamara turned toward his CO. "Captain?"

"You heard the captain, Lieutenant," Commander Leeson barked.

"Aye Sir," Nakamara replied. "Frequencies open."

Stuart stood up and looked into the viewer. "This Captain Rob Stuart of the Federation starship *Providence*," he began. "You are violating the cease-fire between the Dominion and the Federation."

The picture of the attacking ship disappeared from the viewer and was replaced by a Jem'Hedar soldier. "*I am First Loni't'kara*," he said. "*We do not acknowledge the truce.*"

Stuart glanced back toward Kilana, his eyes pleading for the support that he needed to bring about a peaceful solution. The support that he knew she would be unwilling to give. "Speak to them, Ambassador."

"As you wish," the Vorta replied. "First Loni't'Kara," she said. "I am here as an official representative of the Founders."

The Jem'Hedar warrior stood silent.

"You are to return to Dominion space immediately," Kilana ordered.

"*You know that we cannot go without being victorious*," he said. "*Victory is life.*"

The screen went blank as the *Providence* rocked from another blast by the fighter.

Stuart sat back down and faced Kilana, finally realizing that her way of dealing with the renegades of the Dominion was the only way. "How do we defeat them?"

Kilana held onto the armrest of Stuart's chair as the starship was hit by another round of weapons fire. "Their shields are weakest on the rear quarter."

"Stuart turned to face the viewer. "Blake, get behind them."

"Aye Skipper."

"Yoshi," Stuart said to the young tactical officer, "Arm quantum torpedoes and wait for my order."

"Aye, Sir."

The *Providence*, under the skillful control of Blake Adams, zipped around the damaged U.S.S. *Nairobi*. The Jem'Hedar craft was smaller, more maneuverable than the *Intrepid*-class starship. Then again, the Jem'Hedar did not have a pilot like Blake Adams.

As the Jem'Hedar ship tried to avoid its pursuer a phaser blast lanced from the wounded *Excelsior*-class vessel and struck its port engine. And without warning the U.S.S. *Providence* was behind the renegade ship.

"I have positive weapons lock, Captain," Nakamara stated without feeling.

Rob Stuart contemplated the other workable solutions to ending this conflict and knew that this was the only one. "Fire."

Phasers and quantum torpedoes hit their mark. The Jem'Hedar ship's shields collapsed and the vessel vaporized, only leaving fiery debris in its place. The battle was over.

Epilogue

Sickbay seemed quiet, less busy than it had been a few days before. Janice Edwards rose from her desk and entered the reception area when she saw Rob Stuart enter. "Can I help you Captain?" she asked.

"I just wanted to check on Captain Tanaka," Stuart said.

"He's in the main ward now," the doctor said. "I'll be able to release him in a couple of days."

"Good work Doctor," Stuart said before going into the patient ward.

Rob Stuart approached the first biobed where Tanaka lay sleeping. Not wanting to disturb the man Stuart turned to leave.

"Don't go."

Stuart turned back to face the captain. "I didn't mean to wake you," he said.

"I wasn't sleeping," Tanaka said. "Just thinking."

"About what?"

"About my crew," he said sadly. "So many lives wasted. And now I don't even have a ship to command"

Stuart took a couple steps toward the biobed. "Actually, that's not exactly true."

Harrison Tanaka looked at Stuart, puzzlement embedded on his face.

“Captain Thomas was killed during the last battle and Admiral Ross wants you to command the *Nairobi* once it has been repaired,” Stuart said, trying to smile.

“To gain a command at the expense of another captain’s life is not what I want,” Tanaka said, a tear glistening in his eye.

Stuart understood. He had almost lost his CO in a similar battle several months before and could not contemplate taking his place. Still, Julia Thomas would probably want a man like Tanaka to succeed her. “The *Nairobi* needs a good captain, Harrison,” Stuart said. “And I believe that if you refuse this command that her memory would be dishonored.

Tanaka thought for a moment and turned his attention toward Stuart. “I see your point,” he finally said. “And since the ship is named after the city where I grew up I cannot refuse.”

Stuart shook Tanaka’s hand. “Good luck Captain.” And he left the ward.



Commander Melanie Leeson and Doctor Janice Edwards were waiting for their commanding officer to appear. They were glad to see him in a happier mood.

Leeson handed a PADD to her captain. “We’ve been given new orders, Sir,” she said. “We are to return to Earth for resupply and two weeks of shore leave. After that,” Leeson continued, “we are heading for the Beta Quadrant.”

“The Beta Quadrant?” Stuart could not believe his ears.

“It seems that there are some unexplored regions of space that need to be explored,” Leeson said, smiling as she delivered the good news.

Stuart wore a grin on his face that would probably last an eternity. He turned to the chief medical officer. “Care to finish our chess match?”

The doctor’s face lit up. “It would be a privilege, Captain,” she said. “I hope you’re ready to lose again.”

Stuart laughed heartily as the three officers headed for the Starbright Lounge.

The End