

# To Boldly Go: A Common Bond

A U.S.S. *Providence* story

by Cleve Johnson

## ***Captain's Log: Stardate 53147.7***

*We have delivered Ambassador Reinhoff to the capital city on Romulus. The Romulan government has been very generous by allowing us to travel through their space, cutting off about eight months of our voyage to the unexplored parts of the Beta Quadrant. I am thrilled that, at least so far, the alliance between our two governments has lasted even after the war with the Dominion ended.*

## **Chapter 1**

“You have a fine vessel, Captain Stuart,” the Romulan commander complimented as the two sat drinking apple-cinnamon tea.

“Thank you Commander Torek,” Stuart replied.

The two had just finished eating lunch in the CO's private dining room. Stuart enjoyed the Romulan's company. He was a counterpart, a man who shared Stuart's responsibilities of command and who understood the burdens that occasionally come with it.

Stuart set his cup on the table, it had been drained of the tea, his favorite flavored tea, “I appreciate your willingness to escort us through your empire,” he said to his guest.

“Actually Captain,” Torek said as he shifted in his chair, “I was a little disturbed by my government's invitation for a Starfleet vessel to have access to our space.”

Stuart's lips shifted slightly upward. “When our two peoples have been adversarial for over two centuries, it goes against reason to openly trust one another.”

The Romulan smiled. “Truly spoken,” he stated, nodding his head in agreement. “Allies in war...” Torek paused before continuing. “...should also be allies in peace.”

Stuart contemplated his new friend's words. Could he call Torek a friend and know for sure? Someone had to break the old propaganda. Stuart decided that these two—he and Torek—would break the old unwritten code of mistrust and racism together. “What do you do for fun, Commander Torek?” Stuart asked.

Torek did not remember the word ‘fun’ as ever being a part of his vernacular. But there were things that he did enjoy and wondered what this human Starfleet officer would consider as being ‘fun’. “I enjoy riding ch'rupas in the Valley of J'Lofcha,” he said.

Stuart rose from his chair and motioned toward the door. “I have no idea what a cha rupa is,” Stuart said, pronouncing the word the best that he could, “but you could create one on the holodeck to show me.”

Torek arose and clasped Stuart on the shoulder as if they had been well-acquainted comrades. “Come,” he said. “I will teach you how to ride the noblest beast on Romulus.”

And the two newfound friends exited the dining room.

## **Chapter 2**

The bridge was fairly quiet. Commander Melanie Leeson, in command for this shift, typed up the following week's duty schedule on a PADD. She occasionally looked up to observe the crew members manning their stations, knowing that they were all capable of doing their jobs without her watching. But she also was a capable Starfleet officer and took her duty as the first officer very seriously.

T'Les, the Vulcan science officer, continuously ran checks on her monitors to ensure that they were working with peak efficiency. *It must be a Vulcan trait*, Leeson thought. At any rate, the fifty-seven-year-old Vulcan knew her job and what she didn't know, she made it a point to learn.

Yoshi Nakamara sat at Tactical. Leeson knew him better than he knew himself. Of course, he was much like her—devoted to duty and honor. Nakamara learned much from Leeson about being a great security officer and tactician. She took pride in knowing that he would become the best security chief in Starfleet if she had anything to say about it.

As the executive officer contemplated the people that she worked with, her shipmates, her... dare she say it?—Yes, her friends—she heard the turbolift doors swish open. Turning toward the sound, she saw her closest friend approaching.

“There's not much going on in sickbay,” Doctor Edwards said as she walked toward the center seat of the bridge. “What's happening here?”

Leeson shrugged. “About the same as in sickbay,” she replied dryly.

Edwards face lit, her smile illuminated the room—if that was possible. “I wanted to know if you wanted to play some chess after your shift,” the doctor stated.

Leeson continued to enter information into the PADD. “Jan,” the XO said, “you know that I don't like chess.”

Edwards plopped down in the XO's seat next to Leeson, who was occupying the captain's chair. “What about fencing?”

“I prefer a Bat'leth,” came the reply.

“What's going on with you, Mel?”

Leeson stopped entering information and turned toward Edwards. “I'm just a little nervous about having a Romulan Warbird so close,” she said.

“I can understand that,” Edwards replied. “but we are allies now,” the doctor added.

“You're right,” the second-in-command of the starship *Providence* stated. “I'll talk to you after my shift is over,” she finally said in a tone that the doctor knew the conversation was over. At least, over for now.

“After your shift,” Edwards repeated as she rose from the chair and walked toward the turbolift.

Leeson resumed her task of laying out next week's duty roster.

"Commander," Lieutenant Nakamara said to get Leeson's attention.

"What is it, Yoshi?"

"There's a transmission coming from the surface," he continued. "It is a request to beam someone aboard."

Leeson's eyebrows tightened. Who on Romulus would want to beam aboard without previous notice? Was someone trying to defect?

"The message is repeating, Sir," Yoshi said. "The message is coded with the proconsul's voiceprint."

Leeson contemplated whether or not to call the captain, knowing that he was in a meeting with the Romulan commander of the warbird that was assigned to be our escort. So, as the executive officer and current bridge duty officer, she made her choice. "Have transporter room two lock on and beam our guest aboard," she said as she rose from her chair.

"Sir?" Nakamara questioned. "Should I send security?"

"Only one guard," Leeson said as she started toward the turbolift. "And no phasers," she added. "You have the bridge Commander T'Les," Leeson instructed. And the lift doors slid shut before T'Les could reply.



Leeson entered the transporter room, the guard already waiting inside. As she entered, the mysterious 'guest' was already in the process of materializing. Leeson recognized the figure as his body finished coalescing and the energy matrix began to fade.

The man stood on the platform, unmoving. His ears were pointed as Leeson expected would be for someone beaming up from Romulus, but not the smoothness of his forehead. He wore simple Romulan civilian clothing and a symbol that was well known to her since she was a schoolgirl. This was no Romulan. He was Vulcan --a very famous Vulcan to be sure.

"Am I to stand here all day, Commander?" the Vulcan asked with a slight touch of humor in his voice.

Leeson had, unknown to herself, been gaping at the figure before her. "Uh...Welcome aboard," she stammered. "Forgive my nervousness, Ambassador. I never figured that I might meet someone who has made so much history in the Federation and in Starfleet."

The Vulcan exited the platform. "I apologize for the lack of advanced notification," he stated.

"I will arrange for suitable quarters..." Lesson started to say before the guest cut her off with his upheld hand.

"Unnecessary," he said. "I am here on a personal matter and will only be onboard

a few hours,” he continued. “I would like to see Lieutenant Commander T’Les.”

Leeson wondered how T’Les knew the ambassador. They are both from Vulcan. They may have been neighbors on their homeworld. “T’Les, you have a visitor,” she said, after tapping her combadge.

### **Chapter 3**

T’Les continued to monitor the readouts at her science console. She wondered who her surprise visitor might be as she continued to fulfill her duties as the science officer on duty. Little did she know that her life would soon change with the arrival of the as-yet-unknown stranger.

The doors of the turbolift slid open, making the usual swishing sound. T’Les turned to face the rear of the bridge, standing as she saw the Vulcan emerge onto the bridge. Immediately, she raised her right hand with fingers spread in the customary Vulcan salute. “Peace and long life, Ambassador Spock,” she said.

Spock returned the salute. “Live long and prosper,” he replied, having difficulty maintaining emotional control. “I wish to speak with you T’Les, daughter of Seltrek and T’Mora.”

Everyone in the room was silently observing the exchange between their shipmate and the famous Spock of Vulcan.

“You can have the conference room,” Leeson suggested as she motioned Spock toward the door.

Spock allowed T’Les to lead the way into the conference room while he followed her in. The doors opened automatically, allowing them to enter. After they entered the main conference room that was adjacent to the bridge, the door closed behind them.

*I wonder what business one of the most famous people in Starfleet history wants with T’Les,* Leeson thought as she returned to the captain’s chair.

Lieutenant Mary Goodman, from her position at OPS, had seen the older Vulcan enter the bridge and exchange greetings with the *Providence* science officer. She thought that he looked familiar, from a picture in one of her history texts at the academy. She thought about asking Commander Leeson if the Vulcan was who she thought him to be but decided to mind her own business.



“I am honored by your visit Ambassador,” T’Les stated in a very matter-of-fact tone. “I am curious to discover your reason for being here.”

Spock, his hands crossed behind his back, regarded the woman that he had come to see with admiration. She appeared to be one who preferred to get to the point of the matter. “I have come to you on a personal matter,” he said.

T’Les raised her eyebrow in a most Vulcan-like manner. “A personal matter,” she repeated deadpan.

“You may wish to sit down before I begin,” Spock stated.

Without comment, T’Les took her cue and sat on the couch in the captain’s ready

room. Her curiosity was now piqued, but, being a Vulcan, she did not let it show.

Spock remained standing, looking at the other member of his race, as he contemplated how best to tell T'Les what he had come to reveal. He finally decided that the direct approach would be the most logical. "What do you know about your family history?" Spock asked.

T'Les, although taken aback by the question, did not reveal any discomfort that she might have felt. Being a Vulcan meant that she had been trained to harness and control any emotions that she had. "Why do you ask?"

Spock almost allowed himself to smile. "It is not logical to answer a question with a question," he replied.

T'Les nodded in agreement. "I beg forgiveness, Ambassador."

"Nothing to forgive," Spock said. "I want to know how much you know about your lineage."

T'Les sat quietly for a brief moment before answering. Finally, she looked at Spock and said, "I am the daughter of Seltrek and T'Mora," she stated, "as you are already aware." A brief pause. "My maternal grandparents," she continued, "are Skren and Tarella of the Ren-Shee province."

"And what of your paternal grandparents?" Spock inquired.

T'Les lowered her eyes, almost allowing her emotionless demeanor to fail. But, being a Vulcan with advanced training of her mind and will, kept the stoic countenance that defined her people. "My grandmother died two months ago," she said. "And I did not know my grandfather." T'Les stiffened in her posture as she struggled to maintain control over the feelings of mourning and loss and the guilt that she felt for not being with her grandmother when she gave up her *katra*. The remorse for not knowing her grandfather. The sadness that she felt for her own father who did not know his father. Then she looked at Spock and saw a tear glistening in his eye.

"Saavik," Spock whispered.

T'Les knew that Spock was half human, but she did not expect to see him openly display emotion of any sort. Even a moment of weeping. She realized by his reaction that he must have known his grandmother. And known her well. Then the realization of why Spock was here became clear. It was only logical. "Did you know my grandmother?" T'Les asked, not wanting to reveal what she expected.

Spock walked toward the couch and sat next to T'Les. He carefully avoided sitting so close as to come into physical contact with her, creating any kind of telepathic link. He did not immediately say anything, but when he did, T'Les would know the truth. "What did Saavik say about your grandfather?"

T'les was putting all the pieces of the puzzle together, at least the pieces that showed her what she suspected. "She only said that he had died before my father was born," she stated.

Spock thought about that and concluded that it had been a true statement on Saavik's part. It also showed that she embraced a logical course of reasoning in the

raising of her son. His son.

“May I ask a delicate question of a personal nature, Ambassador?” T’Les inquired.

Spock knew that T’Les was aware of the truth. She just needed confirmation. “Although I believe that I know what you will ask,” he said, “I invite you to ask it.”

T’Les did not want to insult Spock if she was wrong, but she rarely made mistakes in her deductions. Therefore, the logical conclusion would be to ask what she was ninety-nine point seven eight two one percent sure of. “Are you...my grandfather?” T’Les finally asked.

Spock looked at T’Les in the eye. “Yes,” he admitted.

There was silence for several seconds before either T’Les or Spock would speak. Spock, for his part, knew that the news that he had just delivered must be quite a shock to his granddaughter, and it would take her some time to process. What he did not know, however, was how she would react.

Finally, the silence was broken by T’Les. “Why was this kept secret from my father and myself?” she asked calmly, though her face began to turn slightly green.

“I do not know why Saavik chose to keep this secret,” Spock said. “It was also kept secret from me until recently when I received a message from her.”

“How could grandmother lie?” T’Les asked incredulously.

“Essentially, she told the truth,” Spock said. “I did die before the birth of your father.”

T’Les was taken by surprise at that statement and, Vulcan or not, could not suppress showing it outwardly. “I do not understand,” she stated, hinting that Spock should tell her more of this bizarre tale.

“Have you ever heard of the Genesis Project?” he asked.

“It was mentioned by my astrophysics instructor at Starfleet Academy,” she replied. “He only said that it was a failed experiment at trying to play God, and most of the information was classified.”

Spock nodded in agreement. “Appropriately stated,” he said. “Genesis, although considered by many to have failed, also did bring about new life as the designers had planned.”

T’Les clearly did not understand. Spock knew that he had to tell her the whole story about Khan, Genesis, his death, and his new birth. Tell her about Saavik and the service that she had done in easing the acceleration of his aging, the urges of pon farr, the ceremony of faltor pan on Mount Selaya. About the last time that he had seen Saavik before the incident with the probe. So he began to tell her everything that led up to Seltrek’s birth.

#### **Chapter 4**

Stuart and Torek came out of the holodeck, arms around each other’s shoulders and laughing. At one time, up until recently, a sight like this would have been imagined

among the Romulans or the people of the Federation. But, with all the differences laid aside, a peaceful alliance seemed to be holding. At least among these two people.

“You did quite well for your first time on a ch’rupa,” Torek said, patting Stuart on the back.

Stuart smiled. “Magnificent animal,” he said. “I’ve ridden horses before, but this beast takes a lot more taming.”

“I imagine that riding a creature with six legs galloping through the fields would be difficult for someone who is used to a four-legged animal,” Torek said. “I hope that you will do me the honor of visiting my ship and allow me to show you some of the sights on Romulus using our holographic simulators.”

Stuart led Torek toward the transporter room as they continued to talk. “I would be delighted,” Stuart said.

“Tomorrow then,” Torek said. “Eighteen thirty hours?”

“I’ll be there,” Stuart agreed as they turned a corner and entered the transporter room. “I must say that I am glad that you will be my escort through your space for the next couple of weeks.”

Torek smiled. “It is an honor to serve,” was all he said as he stepped onto the transport platform. “Until tomorrow.”

Stuart watched as the energy matrix surrounded the Romulan and turned him into particles of energy to be transported to his own vessel. He tapped his combadge. “Stuart to bridge,” the captain said.

*“Bridge, this is Leeson,”* came the reply. *“What can I do for you, Sir?”*

“Prepare to leave orbit in thirty minutes,” Stuart said, as he turned and left the transporter room.

## **Epilogue**

T’Les watched as the transporter beam whisked Spock, her once dead grandfather, back to Romulus. The last thing that she noticed was the Vulcan salute, with Spock’s fingers spread apart in the usual way. She turned and left transporter room two and walked the corridors of the ship, thinking about the eventful day. Truly her life had been changed unexpectedly and she did not quite know how to deal with what she had learned. About the bond that she shared with Spock, one the most famous citizens of Vulcan. She thought about her options and headed straight for the nearest turbolift.



The door slid open and T’Les entered the office, her hands held behind her back in typical Vulcan style. “I require your services,” she stated.

Counselor James Goodman, never thinking that he would counsel a Vulcan, motioned for the science officer to sit down. “What can I do for you, Commander?”

**The End**