

# To Boldly Go: Awakenings

A U.S.S. *Providence* story

By Cleve Johnson

The U.S.S. *Providence* cruised through the void of space.

Rob Stuart, captain of this new vessel, had spent the last two months familiarizing himself with his new command. It was a new class of starship with the latest scientific technology that Starfleet had to offer. Stuart hoped that the *Ericsson*-class would prove to be all that Engineering Command promised it to be. It *needed* to be all that the designers had promised, especially out in the unexplored regions of the Beta Quadrant.

Stuart rose from the command chair that occupied the center of the bridge and moved toward the CONN station where Lieutenant Commander Blake Adams skillfully piloted the small but mighty vessel. “What’s our ETA to the Theta Omicron system?” Stuart asked his long-time friend.

“Three hours at present speed, Skipper,” Adams replied nonchalantly. “Would you like me to shorten that?”

Stuart smiled as he turned and walked away. “Three hours will be sufficient, Blake,” he stated. “You have the bridge,” Stuart added as he entered his ready room.



How long had it been? The old man sat on the edge of the bunk contemplating the past years. He had lost account of the passage of time since he had been stranded, adrift in space.

He was getting weaker each day. For more years than he could remember, he had kept the medical and life support systems working at peak efficiency although the propulsion systems, except for maneuvering thrusters, had been inoperable for what seemed to have been an eternity. He had kept communications operating, constantly transmitting a distress call, but no one had heard. No one had responded. And with the death of his wife last month, the man had lost hope of ever seeing another living human being again.

## Chapter 1

Janice Edwards smiled at the young crewman as he jumped off the examination table. “You’ll be happy to know that you are perfectly healthy,” the doctor told her young patient.

“Thank you, Doctor,” the crewman replied. “Am I free to go?”

“Certainly,” Edwards said as the twenty-year-old turned to hurry toward the door that led out of Sickbay.

Edwards went back to her office to check her schedule. As she sat behind her desk and activated the computer monitor she noticed a red rose laying in the replicator dispenser. She got up and retrieved the flower, wondering who it could have been from.

“Computer,” Edwards stated. “Who replicated this rose?”

The computer was not forthcoming with the answer that the doctor wanted. *“That information is classified,”* the feminine computer voice stated.

“Hmm,” Edwards wondered. “It seems that I have a secret admirer.”

Just then Commander Melanie Leeson entered Edwards’ office. Noticing the rose in the CMO’s hand, Leeson smiled. “Taking up gardening?” she asked.

Edwards motioned for the first officer to sit down across from the desk as the doctor sat in her chair. “Do you know anything about this?” Edwards asked.

Leeson shook her head. “Who sent it?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” Edwards shrugged. “And the computer has been sworn to secrecy,” she added. “So,” the doctor continued, laying down the rose. “What brings you here?”

“I haven’t seen you around for awhile,” Leeson said, “and I wanted to make sure that you were okay.”

“I’ve just been busy trying to finish the annual physicals,” Edwards said. “I have to make sure our crew is taking care of themselves,” she joked.

“How many more do you have, Jan?”

“Just the captain,” Edwards said.

Leeson leaned toward Edwards, speaking in a low tone. “Do you think that the flower came from him?”

The edges of Edwards’ lips turned slightly upward as she thought about that possibility. “I don’t think that he’s interested, Mel,” the doctor stated.

Leeson thought that she detected disappointment in the doctor’s voice. “Didn’t you have dinner with him last week?” she asked.

“Captain Stuart frequently shares a meal with one of his officers,” Edwards retorted. “I’m just one of the crew like anyone else.”

Leeson just smiled at her friend. “The captain will share breakfast or lunch with a fellow officer,” she said. “I don’t remember him having dinner with anyone except maybe Blake Adams,” Leeson added.

“You’re making something out of nothing,” the doctor said.

Lesson’s combadge chirped. *“Bridge to Leeson.”*

The executive officer tapped the Starfleet insignia on her uniform. “Go ahead, Captain,” she replied.

*“Could you join me on the bridge?”* Stuart asked over the intercom signal. *“We’re picking up a faint distress signal.”*

Leeson rose from her seat. “On my way, Captain.” Tapping her combadge to close the transmission, Leeson smiled at Edwards. “Duty calls,” she said as she turned to

exit the CMO's office.



Commander Leeson entered the bridge and moved quickly to her station at the captain's right side. "What have I missed?" Leeson inquired as she sat beside her CO.

Stuart turned his head toward his first officer. "It seems that we are not the first Federation ship to venture this far into the Beta Quadrant," he stated.

Leeson stared at Stuart, awed by his statement. "I'm not aware of any other starship that has explored this part of the galaxy, Sir," she replied.

"According to our records," Stuart began, "there have not been."

"Excuse me, Captain," the Vulcan science officer interrupted. "I have identified the signal as coming from the U.S.S. *Kennedy*, registry NCC-1963."

"Thank you, Commander," Stuart replied. "Computer, what information do you have on the starship *Kennedy*, NCC-1963?"

*"The U.S.S. Kennedy is a Constitution II-class starship under the command of Captain George Hanson. It was reported lost on Stardate 12648.6 while en route to Earth from Andor,"* the computer stated. *"The Kennedy was named after a 20th Century president of the United States of Amer..."*

"Thank you Computer," Stuart said. "Blake, have you locked onto the coordinates of the *Kennedy*'s transmission?"

Blake Adams punched information into his console and nodded. "Course locked in, Skipper."

"Engage at maximum warp," the captain ordered.

Melanie Leeson leaned toward her captain. "Do you think there could still be survivors after almost sixty-four years?" she whispered.

"That's what we're going to find out," Stuart replied. "Make use of the terminal in my ready room and find out as much as you can on that ship, Exec. You have about two hours before we arrive."

"Aye, Captain," Leeson said as she rose from her station and moved toward the door to Stuart's ready room.

## Chapter 2

Janice Edwards studied the results of the crew physicals. As much as she tried to focus on her task, the rose laying on the corner of her desk kept drawing Edwards' attention away from her work. The doctor could not keep herself from wondering who sent the beautiful flower. She hoped that it was the captain, but she also did not want to set herself up for a letdown.

The more she fantasized about starting a relationship the more Jan mentally kicked herself. She knew the risks of being involved with a fellow officer from the experience of being married to one who loved her but demonstrated that his career came

first. Could she truly allow herself to fall in love with another career Starfleet officer knowing all that might come with it? Too late. She realized that she had already fallen for Robert P. Stuart. Jan could only hope that Stuart felt the same way. Or maybe she hoped that he didn't.

Jan looked at the rose, contemplating its meaning. She walked toward the replicator unit and activated it by touching the control panel. "Computer," she said, "replicate a Victorian-style clear crystal vase filled half-full of room-temperature water and a cubic centimeter of nutritional plant supplement."

The replicator complied and produced the vase that the doctor had ordered. She removed the vase and set it on the desk, placing the red rose within it. She smelled the fragrance before returning to reviewing the medical files and decided that she would wait to see if the captain, assuming he was the giver of the rose, would make another move.



Melanie Leeson had been studying the records of the starship *Kennedy* for the past hour and a half. She discovered that it was the last *Constitution II*'s to be constructed and one of the last to be in service at the time of its reported disappearance. What really bothered the first officer was the lack of information about its final mission.

Rob Stuart entered his ready room and approached the desk where Leeson sat. She started to rise from her seat, but Stuart raised his hand signaling her to remain seated. The captain sat across from his first officer, in the chair that she normally would be in during one of their conferences. "Any progress, Exec?"

Leeson leaned back in the captain's chair. "There isn't much to go on, Captain" she stated. "It appears that the ship was docked at Starbase 4. The captain granted shore leave for the crew."

Leeson looked back to the computer terminal to scan more information. "The ship departed on Stardate 12645.4 with less than a third of her crew with orders to travel to Andor."

"Andor," Stuart repeated. "For what purpose?"

Leeson continued. "There was some kind of medical emergency that involved an Andorian ambassador and some of his staff," she said. The *Kennedy* was the closest starship to Andor. Starfleet wanted the ambassador and his staff transported to Starfleet Medical on Earth immediately."

Stuart wondered why Starfleet seemed so pressed to get a group of Andorians to Earth that the captain did not take time to recall the entire crew. "Does the record show why they only had a skeleton crew?"

"No," Leeson said, shaking her head. "Perhaps the medical emergency was so great that speed was more important."

"Did the ship disappear before or after it reached Andor?" Stuart asked.

"After," Leeson stated. "Andorian Space Central reported that the *Kennedy* entered orbit and had left, presumably toward Earth, within an hour of its arrival." The first

officer paused as her commanding officer contemplated the information that she had shared. “Captain Hanson’s last transmission to Starfleet Command indicated that they had encountered some type of spatial anomaly in Sector 018.”

“There are no anomalies within a hundred lightyears of that sector,” Stuart exclaimed.

“It could have been a wormhole,” Leeson stated in her most professional tone. “There’s only one that is known to be stable.”

“In Bajoran space.”

Leeson nodded.

“Anything else?” Stuart asked.

“Starfleet sent three starships to search Sector 018 for any sign of the *Kennedy* or spatial anomalies,” Leeson said. “But the search was called off after two weeks and the ship was officially listed as missing.”

Stuart contemplated the situation. “And now we may have found it after more than sixty years.”

“It appears so, Sir.” The first officer paused. “I assume that you will want to send an away team, Captain,” she commented.

Stuart rose from his chair and pulled down his uniform jacket. “Certainly Exec,” he said. “Put your team together and brief them. I’ll be on the bridge.”

Stuart turned and exited his ready room as Leeson called the members of the crew that would join her for the away mission.

### Chapter 3

The old man stood in Sickbay hovering over the chambers that encased those that he had been entrusted to protect. He knew that he had a duty to these people, but that didn’t seem to matter anymore. For more than sixty years he had maintained power to keep the stasis chambers working. Since the death of his wife, the man lost his desire to fulfill his duty. He had lost his ability to care about these people in stasis. He thought about just deactivating the chambers and letting them out to die slowly of the disease that they carried within them. But that would give his nemesis, the one who poisoned these innocents, the victory. No, he decided that he would leave the stasis chambers functioning and hope that eventually the derelict starship would be found.

The man left Sickbay and walked the curved corridor to the nearest turbolift. He punched in his destination on the control panel and was on his way to the only place that seemed to bring any comfort to his lonely existence.



The *Providence* had just entered normal space when Commander Leeson entered the bridge. She saw a speck in the middle of the main viewer that appeared to be the general shape of a *Constitution*-class starship.

“Magnify to factor 4,” she heard her captain order.

“She looks in pretty good shape for her age,” Blake Adams said from the flight control console.

Stuart stood and walked down the steps to the lower level next to the CONN. Leeson joined him, placing her hand on Blake’s shoulder. “I’ve never seen a ship of this class before,” Leeson muttered.

Stuart smiled. “There’s one in the fleet museum,” he stated. “Although, that one is an original configuration of that class.”

Leeson studied the image on the screen. She loved away missions but especially looked forward to this one after seeing the obsolete starship on the screen.

“Full sensor sweeps, Commander,” Stuart said as he turned to return to the center seat.

“Scanning, Captain,” came T’Les’ voice.

“Blake,” the captain said, “take us within 2 kilometers.”

“Aye, Skipper.”

No one spoke. The entire bridge crew focused their attention on the viewer. All except for T’Les who finally broke the silence.

“The warp core is operating at minimal energy levels, but both warp and impulse drives are inoperative,” the Vulcan science officer stated. “All power, including life support, has been terminated with the exception of decks five, six, seven, Main Engineering, and the botanical garden located in the secondary hull.”

“Energy conservation,” Adams stated.

“I have also identified the presence of one human male on board and five additional faint life readings in Sickbay,” T’Les added.

Stuart thought for a moment. “Some of them might be in stasis?” he asked.

“A distinct possibility,” T’Les responded.

“Time to find out,” Stuart said, nodding to his first officer.

Leeson walked toward the turbolift. “Mister Nakamara.”

The security chief left his station and joined the XO.

Leeson tapped her combadge. “Doctor Edwards, Lieutenant Salesh please report to Transporter room one,” she ordered just as the turbolift doors closed.

“Establish a link with their computer and download all information that she’s accumulated over the years, Commander,” Stuart said.

“Aye Captain,” T’Les replied.

## **Chapter 4**

Chief Petty Officer John McKinney checked the pattern buffers and returned to the console. He noticed the order from Commander Leeson indicating that an away team

would be beaming to a derelict starship that had been missing for sixty-three years. McKinney also noticed the name of the starship and remembered the family history that his mother had shared with him as a boy.

The doors slid open, interrupting “Mac’s” thoughts, and Doctor Edwards walked in. “Am I the first to arrive?” she asked.

“Come into my humble abode, Doctor,” McKinney invited. “Since the others aren’t here yet, can I ask how my physical turned out?”

“You have the health of a forty-year-old, Chief,” the doctor said stone-faced.

“I *am* a forty-year-old,” McKinney smirked.

“Then you’re right where you should be,” Edwards jibed back.

McKinney shot the doctor a look just as Leeson, Nakamara, and Salesh entered the transporter room. “Set phasers on stun,” Leeson said as she, followed by the others, stepped into the transport chamber. “Chief, how close can you get us to Sickbay?”

McKinney set the coordinates. “Right outside the door, Commander,” he said.

“Energi....” Leeson started to say.

“Commander,” McKinney interrupted. “I would like to make a personal request.”

Leeson cocked her head and raised her eyebrow in a very Vulcan-like expression, but said nothing.

“I would like to join the away team,” McKinney continued.

“For what purpose?” Leeson wondered out loud.

McKinney stepped from behind the console. “My grandfather was a security officer on the KENNEDY,” he stated. “My mother lost him when she was only seven.”

Leeson thought for a moment. If her grandfather or a relative had been lost as the chief’s had, she would want to be included as well. “Do you think you can keep your mind on the mission?”

“I’ll do my best, Commander,” McKinney replied.

Leeson nodded her agreement. “Get a phaser and tricorder,” she said.

Mac bent down behind the console and retrieved not only a phaser and tricorder but an emergency repair kit as well. He stepped up to the platform with the others, turned and faced the first officer, who was impressed that he had already prepared to be a part of the away mission.

“Computer,” Mac said. “Activate holographic transporter technician.”

A female hologram appeared and said, “Please state the nature in which I can serve you.”

“We want to beam over to the starship *Kennedy*, Gina,” Mac said. “Coordinates are laid in,” he added.

Leeson looked at Chief McKinney with a puzzled expression. “Energize,” she said. And they away team suddenly found themselves in a corridor outside of Sickbay of a *Constitution II*-class starship.

“Gina?” Leeson asked.

Mac shrugged. “I gave her a name,” he said. “Holographic transporter technician seemed a little too impersonal.”

“I’m pickup up definite life signs in here,” Edwards said, scanning the door that led to the medical facility. “The readings indicate one humanoid and four Andorians, all in stasis.”

“Let’s have a look,” Leeson said as she led the way toward the door that immediately parted before her.



The old man had fallen asleep on the bench in the botanical garden. He had spent much of his time in this place, talking with the woman he had recently buried. But he began to wake as if coming out of a daze, realizing that his personal communicator was beeping. It was the intruder alert signal that he had programmed years earlier to indicate help had arrived. Help or maybe something not so helpful.

The man rose from the bench and stared at the mound of dirt a few feet away. “We’ve got company, Maureen,” he said to his deceased wife. “I better see if they are friend or foe,” the man added as he turned.

The man noticed an object outside the huge transparent aluminum windows. He walked toward the windows and studied the design of the ship that had come alongside the *Kennedy*. The man could not see any specific markings from this distance but noticed the saucer-shape and dual warp nacelles of the vessel. Clearly, he had never seen a ship like the one he stared at, but it appeared to have the familiar design of a Federation starship. Had the hopelessness and loneliness finally driven him crazy? Or was he witnessing the miracle of finally being rescued after all this time?

He pulled himself away from the windows and walked briskly to the nearest turbolift.



Yoshi Nakamara bent over one of the stasis chambers, looking at the Andorian within. “This one looks familiar,” he stated. “I think this might be the ambassador who participated in the Babel Conference over a hundred years ago.”

“How would you know that, Lieutenant?” Mac asked.

“History course from the Academy,” Yoshi replied nonchalantly. “I always liked history.”

“What are those purple splotches on their faces and hands, Jan?” Leeson asked the CMO, who had been checking the medical database.

“The Andorians have been exposed to *Thelicoptus Shakrila*,” the doctor stated



without taking her eyes from the readout on the terminal that she was working at.

“In English, Doctor,” Mac requested.

Edwards smiled. “That’s the Andorian scientific name for it,” she said. “It means *purple death*.”

“Are we in danger of getting it?” Yoshi inquired.

“Humans are immune to it,” Edwards said as she left the monitor and walked toward the stasis chamber that contained the human. “And that being the case, I wonder why this man is in here.”

“Because that’s where we imprisoned him.”

Each member of the away team, startled, quickly focused their attention on the man that had entered through the Sickbay entrance. Leeson and Nakamara had their phasers drawn at the sound of the old man’s voice.

“Who *are* you?” Leeson asked.

## Chapter 5

The man recognized a variation of the Starfleet emblem on each of the strangers’ uniforms. As for the uniforms, Starfleet had made many changes in sixty years. He could only assume that the “things” being pointed toward him by two of the strangers were modern phasers.

“We don’t want to hurt you,” the woman said. “Please tell us who you are.”

The old man had noticed that the woman and the young Asian man lowered their weapons. He slowly took a few steps forward. “Forgive me for surprising you,” he said. “But you have given me quite a surprise yourselves.”

“We tried to hail the ship, but no one responded,” Leeson said. “I’m Commander Melanie Leeson of the Federation Starship *Providence*,” she stated as she extended her hand toward the elderly man.

He took it and fell to his knees, squeezing her hand, not willing to let go. Edwards, thinking the man was having a seizure, ran to his aid.

Waving her off, the man looked up, tears running down his cheeks. “I’m alright,” he said. “Just didn’t think I would see another living person again.”

He struggled to get up. With the help of Leeson and Edwards, he found his footing and smiled slightly. Edwards knew that it was a forced smile and placed her hand on his shoulder to bring comfort.

“I am Lieutenant Raymond Reynolds,” the man finally said. “I’m the last remaining crew member of the starship *Kennedy*.”

“Can you tell us what happened?” Leeson inquired.

Edwards stepped forward. “I think we should get him to our Sickbay first,” she interrupted.

“No!” It was Reynolds who objected. “I can’t leave Maureen.”

“Who is Maureen?” Edwards gently asked.

“She’s my wife,” he said sadly. “She *was* my wife,” he added. “I can’t leave her.”

McKinney stepped forward, not wanting to interrupt the man’s grief, yet he needed to know about his own grandfather. “Sir?”

Reynolds, still crying, wiped his eyes and looked at the younger man.

“I’m so sorry about what happened to you,” Mac said sympathetically. “At a later time, I would like to ask you a personal question.” Then McKinney stepped back and exited the room.

Salesh watched as the transporter chief left and turned toward Leeson. “I would like to inspect the engineering section, Commander,” he stated. “I could take Chief McKinney with me to keep him busy,” the engineer added.

Leeson nodded her approval and Salesh left to find McKinney.

Reynolds watched as the crewman left, followed by the alien officer. Somehow, he looked familiar. “What is that man’s name?” he asked.

“That’s Chief John McKinney,” Leeson replied.

“The name isn’t familiar, but I think that I should know him,” Reynolds mumbled. “That couldn’t be possible.”

Leeson gently placed her hand on the man’s arm. “His grandfather was a member of your crew,” she said. “He wants to find out what happened to him.”

“Do you know his grandfather’s name?”

“No, I’m sorry,” Leeson replied. “He can wait until you’re ready to talk.”

“I’m ready now, Commander,” Reynolds stated somewhat forcefully.

Edwards pulled out her medical tricorder and scanned the elderly officer. “You seem fairly healthy,” the CMO said, “but I think you need to add protein to your diet.”

Reynolds smiled wryly. “Wouldn’t happen to have a juicy steak on your ship, would you?”

“I think that I could prescribe that if you agree to come to my sickbay,” Edwards said temptingly. “I promise that nothing will happen to Maureen,” she added when Reynolds’ countenance began to lower at the thought of leaving his wife.

“I agree,” Reynolds said after a slight hesitation.

Leeson moved forward. “First, please tell me about this man in the stasis chamber.”

Reynolds walked toward the canister and stared at the sleeping human. “The captain decided that this would be the most secure prison for him,” he stated. “This man is a spy. Reynolds looked toward Leeson. “He tried killing Ambassador Sras and his aids by deliberately infecting them with the *Purple Death*,” he said angrily.

“Do you know why he would do such a thing?” Edwards asked.

Reynolds thought for a moment before answering. “I have no idea why,” he said, “but I do know that he is part of a subversive organization that claims to look out for the best interests of the Federation.”

“Fortunately, a cure was discovered for *Purple Death* over 40 years ago,” Edwards stated. She turned to Leeson. “I’ll arrange for the stasis chambers to be beamed to Sickbay after I complete a physical on Lieutenant Reynolds,” the doctor said.

“Good idea, Jan,” Leeson replied. “Yoshi and I will make a quick survey of the ship before we beam back.”

“Are you ready, Lieutenant?” Edwards asked Reynolds.

“It’s been a long time since I have used a transporter,” he said. “I don’t remember how it feels.”

“You won’t feel a thing,” Edwards said. Tapping her communicator the doctor spoke. “Edwards to *Providence*. Two to beam directly to Sickbay.”

Moments later Edwards and Reynolds were engulfed in the beam of energy that transported them away.



Salesh and McKinney searched the antique engine room. Salesh was impressed by the design, although it did not compare with the more advanced modern starships. McKinney, although an engineer, did not seem too interested in exploring this nostalgic ship with all of its historic artifacts.

“You seem distracted, Chief,” Salesh said, trying to offer assistance.

McKinney smiled, trying unsuccessfully to hide his personal feelings. “I’m sorry Lieutenant Salesh,” he replied. “I know that I should be excited about being aboard a ship of this class, but I’m more interested in talking to the old man.”

Salesh K’Tok, being Derkhanan, had special insight into the soul of John McKinney that most people could not understand. But even special insight did not allow the chief engineer to fully grasp why McKinney placed so much importance on finding out about a man who he had never met. True, the man in question was McKinney’s grandfather, but why did he have such an emotional attachment to a complete stranger.

“I am sure that you will find the answers that you seek, Chief,” Salesh stated. “However, you must be prepared to accept what you may not want to hear.”

Mac stopped surveying the old engineering display console. “You think that I refuse to believe that he’s dead,” McKinney retorted.

Salesh did not answer for a moment, then finally spoke. “I think that you may not be willing to accept that he may be alive,” he said. “At least not until you have evidence to support it.”

## Chapter 6

Rob Stuart and Blake Adams walked through the corridor of the ship that doubled as their home. Blake slowed and pulled at Stuart's arm to get his attention.

"Before you see Doctor Edwards I think that you should know something," Blake said.

"What's that, Blake?"

Blake looked down at his feet, a little uneasy. "I uh..."

"What did you do?" Rob asked in a forceful tone.

Blake tried to look innocent, but Rob had known his CONN officer too long to not notice the mischievous gleam in his eye. "I may have given Jan the impression that you have feelings for her," Blake said.

"And how did you do that?" Stuart wanted to know.

"I sent a red rose to the replicator in her office," Adams stated nonchalantly.

Stuart stared at Adams. His long-time friend just stood, staring back with a child-like grin on his face. "You sent it from my replicator so she would think it was from me."

"No, I sent it from mine," Blake replied. "I sent it anonymously and encoded the computer to not reveal where it came from."

Stuart smiled confidently. "Why are so sure that she'll think it's from me, then?"

"Because Mel tells me that Jan has made some comments that she cares for you," Blake said. "And don't tell me that you don't feel the same way about her."

Stuart could not deny that he held an attraction for Janice Edwards, but he did not feel that he could act on his feelings because of his position as commanding officer. "Of course I care about Jan," Stuart replied. "But you know why I can't pursue a relationship with a member of my crew."

Blake shook his head and begin walking again. And Stuart followed after him. "That's not according to Starfleet's rules," Blake said, trying to urge his friend into a relationship with the CMO.

Stuart stopped in the middle of the corridor as Adams continued on. He thought about what Blake said and decided that it was a personal rule that he did not want to break. Or did he not want to take the risk of loving someone and possibly losing her to one of the many dangers that life on a starship might bring. And how would the crew react? Would he be able to keep from giving preferential treatment? Could he separate the personal and professional relationships? Could she?

Stuart reacquainted himself with his location, then turned around to search for the nearest turbolift.



"You'll be happy to know," Doctor Edwards said, "that I am giving you a clean bill of health."

Lieutenant Ray Reynolds began to sit up on the examination table. "Maureen took

good care of me,” he said. “She was the head nurse on my ship.”

Edwards placed her hand on the elderly man’s shoulder. “You must miss her very much,” she said sympathetically. “I wish we could have arrived sooner.”

Reynolds feigned a weak smile.

Before Reynolds or Edwards could continue their conversation the door to Sickbay slid open, revealing Rob Stuart. As the captain strode across the room Edwards stiffened and motioned toward him. “Lieutenant Raymond Reynolds, this is Captain Robert P. Stuart.”

“A pleasure,” Stuart stated as he offered his hand.

“Likewise,” Reynolds replied, shaking Stuart’s outstretched hand. “I can’t tell you how surprised and happy I am to be with people again.”

“We are at your disposal, Mister Reynolds.” Stuart turned toward Edwards. “Is he up for a short debriefing?” Stuart asked.

“I think so, Captain,” she said. “But I promised him a juicy steak dinner in the officer’s lounge. Can it wait until later?”

“Of course,” Stuart replied. “I want to have a chance to study the information that we’re downloading first.”

Reynolds stepped down from his seated position on the table. “I’ll be glad to tell you anything that you want to know, Captain.”

“I appreciate that Mister Reynolds,” Stuart replied. “I’ll arrange guest quarters for you while you’re dining with the doctor.”

“Thank you, Sir,” Reynolds said.

“Doctor Edwards, could I meet with you later?” Stuart asked.

Edwards tried not to let her professional demeanor lapse, secretly hoping that Stuart wanted to discuss something of a more personal matter. “I should be free at 1800 hours, Captain,” she replied.

“I’ll be in your office at 1800 then,” Stuart stated as a matter-of-fact. Then he turned to leave Sickbay.

## Chapter 7

Commander Melanie Leeson strode toward the turbolift. The lift doors parted, revealing Salesh, McKinney, and Nakamara. “I was just on my way to join you,” Leeson stated. “Report.”

“The warp core is operating at fifteen percent power,” Salesh offered. “The fuel reserves are almost depleted and the dilithium crystals show indications that they may soon fail,” he added.

“Commander,” Nakamara said. “There are eight graves in the botanical garden. I assume that one of them belongs to his wife, but none of them are marked.”

“We’ll find out from Lieutenant Reynolds who else is buried there,” Leeson stated. “But the question of what happened to the rest of the crew remains.”

“All the shuttles are missing,” Nakamara added. “They must have abandoned ship.”

Leeson nodded. “Let’s get back to the *Providence* and see if our guest can clue us in,” she said.



Rob Stuart studied the *Kennedy*’s log entries. Lieutenant Reynolds kept making entries until a few weeks ago when his wife had died. But it was the older entries made by the ship’s captain that interested Stuart most.

The door chime chirped, breaking Stuart’s concentration. “Come,” he said.

The door parted, revealing Melanie Leeson. “Sorry to bother you, Captain,” she said apologetically.

Stuart motioned for her to come in. “Not at all,” he said. “How was it?”

Leeson almost misunderstood the captain’s question but realized that he wanted her emotional response to being on a ship of a past era. “I must admit that I felt awed by the technological advances we’ve made since that ship was built,” she said.

“You’re not much of a historian are you, Exec?” Stuart asked with a smirk.

Leeson thought about that. “Not really, Captain.”

Stuart pulled out a chair for his first officer, implying that she should sit. Stuart sat down in a chair that faced hers. “I’ve been studying the *Kennedy*’s logs,” he stated. “It appears that your theory that a wormhole was responsible for their disappearance is correct.” Stuart paused to see if Leeson wanted to add anything. She didn’t. “They never knew what part of the galaxy they were in, but warp drive was inoperable, so they scanned for any nearby star systems with M-class worlds.”

“Did they find any?” Leeson inquired.

Stuart nodded. “The wormhole deposited the ship within the boundaries of such a star system,” he said. “Two planets were class M,” he said. “The fourth planet showed sub-tropical climate with an oxygen content slightly higher than Earth’s with slightly lower gravity.”

Leeson shifted in her seat. “Were some of the crew left there?”

“A landing party, led by the first officer, encountered a pack of large carnivorous reptiles,” he said. “Only one crewman made it back to the ship. And she died a few hours later.”

Leeson thought of all the dangerous situations that she had encountered during her career. The possibility of being eaten by a dinosaur-like creature was not something that she would like to face.

“After their loss, the Captain ordered the ship to the fifth planet, which showed

cooler temperatures and similar gravity to Earth,” Stuart continued. “They found a humanoid civilization that compared with Earth’s early 20th century.”

“They didn’t try to contact the inhabitants, did they?” Leeson asked excitedly.

Stuart shook his head negatively. “No,” he said. “But Captain Hanson decided to stay in orbit a few months to study the civilization while the ship underwent repairs.”

Leeson shook her head, wondering how a crew stranded in an unknown sector of space could stay true to the Prime Directive. “It must have been hard for them to stay on the ship with that planet so close.”

“Hanson suspected that some of his crew wanted to jump ship and mingle with the population,” Stuart said. “So, he decided to leave orbit and set out for the next nearest star system.”

“Without warp drive?” Leeson asked incredulously. “That would have taken years!”

“Hanson didn’t want to risk breaking the Prime Directive,” Stuart stated. “He felt that the temptation would be too great for his crew to keep from settling on the planet.”

Leeson got up and looked out the window, staring at the elder starship that seemed to hang in space. “All the shuttles are missing,” she said. “Perhaps the crew went back there,” she said.

“The captain thought so,” Stuart said. “One of his last log entries stated that most of the crew wanted to leave the ship and return there. Hanson was afraid of a mutiny, so he let anyone go who wanted to .”

Leeson closed her eyes, shocked that a Starfleet crew would consider mutiny. Of course, the captain’s fears may have been unfounded.

“Here,” Stuart said, handing his first officer a PADD. “Read this.”

Melanie Leeson took the device from her CO and scanned through the log entry of the *Kennedy*’s commander. According to the log, only nine people stayed with the captain to care for the Andorian Ambassador and his staff. Only nine had remained loyal to protect the Prime Directive. Only nine tried to reach another star system.

Stuart reached for the PADD after his first officer finished reading. “If in a similar situation,” he said, “I hope that my crew will act better than his did.”

“Any who don’t will answer to me,” Leeson commented.

## Chapter 8

Janice Edwards had escorted Lieutenant Reynolds to the guest quarters assigned to him. He thanked her for an enjoyable steak dinner and excused himself for the evening. Edwards started to go toward the captain’s quarters but decided to head for the turbolift instead. He would be coming to see her at 1800 hours in Sickbay anyway. And she did not want to seem too eager to see him.



Chief John McKinney tried to concentrate on recalibrating the targeting sensor controls, but his mind kept desiring to talk with the old man from the other starship. He tried to stay focused to no avail. "I might as well get it over with," he said to himself as he closed the panel and rose to his feet.

As McKinney strode toward the door that led out of the transporter room his combadge chirped. He tapped it, not breaking stride. "McKinney here," he said.

*"Sorry to bother you,"* the voice of Lieutenant Reynolds said, *"but I know that you wanted to talk with me."*

McKinney smiled, thinking that his timing was perfect. "I sure do, Sir."

*"I'm in guest quarters 2-A if you are available now,"* Reynolds said.

"On my way, Sir," McKinney said as the doors parted for him.



Stuart wandered the corridors of Deck 5. He wrestled with his feelings about Janice Edwards as he approached Sickbay. Could he be totally honest with the doctor without hurting her? It was part of the risk that he needed to make. And he could not put this conversation off any longer.

Stuart stopped in front of the entrance to Edwards' office, pausing before entering. *Here goes nothing,* he thought as the door parted and he entered the room.

"Punctuality must be your middle name, Captain," Edwards said, noting that the chronometer on the computer monitor had just switched to indicate 1800 hours.

"Actually, Doctor," Stuart began, "my middle name is Patrick."

Edwards invited the captain to sit in the chair across the desk from hers. "Would you like something to drink?" she asked. "Tea?"

Stuart held up a hand, declining the offer. "No thank you," he replied. "Actually I wanted to talk with you about something that you received earlier."

"What would that be?" she responded.

Stuart took a deep breath. "I believe that you found a rose in your replicator and may think that I sent it," he said.

Edwards began to feel foolish. Could her assumption that the rose came from Stuart be incorrect? She began to blush. "Are you saying that you didn't?"

Stuart lowered his gaze, then looked into the doctor's blue eyes. "It was Blake's way of playing Cupid," he stated. "Actually, I wish that I had sent a dozen."

Edwards' mouth dropped open. She wanted to hear something like that come out of Rob Stuart's mouth but found it difficult to believe. "I don't know what to say," she said. "I had only hoped that you might feel something toward me, but..."

"I have had feelings for you for a long time," Stuart said seriously, "but two things have kept me from acting on them."



Edwards waited for Stuart to say something more, but decided to prompt him since he remained silent. “What kept you quiet?”

Stuart got up and paced the floor. He stopped in front of a portrait of a ballet dancer on the wall, his back facing the doctor. “I was afraid of how I would act in a relationship with a member of my crew,” he finally said. “And...a memory.”

Edwards rose from her seat and walked to Stuart, standing behind him, placing her hand on his shoulder. “What memory?”

Stuart turned to face Edwards. “I lost someone that I loved once,” he said, a tear glistening in his eye. “We were going to be married.”

“And you feel like you would be betraying her?” Edwards asked sympathetically.

Stuart shook his head, wiping a tear that rolled down his right cheek. “No,” he said. “She would want me to love again... and be happy.” He paused. “I’m afraid of loving you and losing you on an away mission or in a battle with some hostile aliens that we might encounter.”

Edwards looked Stuart in the eyes, trying to read the depth of this man’s soul. “Risk is a part of wearing this uniform, Rob,” she stated firmly. “I’m willing to risk anything to love you,” she added.

Stuart was stunned. He knew that his feelings for Janice Edwards had been adrift just like that derelict ship that floated alongside the *Providence*. But now, Stuart had gained clarity and could allow himself to love her without fear of losing her, without showing favoritism. He took the doctor in her arms and kissed her.



Lieutenant Reynolds greeted Chief McKinney as he entered the guest quarters. “Come in Chief McKinney,” he said warmly. “I understand that you had a question for me.”

McKinney stepped through the open doorway, allowing the hatch to slide shut. “Yes Sir,” he replied. “I wanted to know if you knew my grandfather.”

“He was a member of the *Kennedy* crew?” Reynolds inquired, already knowing the answer.

“Yes, Sir.” McKinney was beginning to feel anxious about learning of the fate of his mother’s father. “His name is... was... I don’t know if he could even be alive,” the transporter chief finally muttered.

Reynolds pointed to the chairs near the viewports. “Let’s sit down,” he said. “Tell me his name and I’ll see if I can help you find your answers.”

McKinney sat in the nearest chair, following the old man’s lead. “Lieutenant Donald Sims,” McKinney stated. “I think he was with ship’s security,” he added.

Ray Reynolds looked sad, a teardrop forming in his right eye. “I knew Don well,” he said. “He was my best friend.”

McKinney noticed the sadness that radiated from Reynolds and realized that the grandfather that he had hoped to find must be dead. “He’s dead, isn’t he?” he asked.

Reynolds just sat motionless, staring out the viewport. “He died two years ago,” he stated sadly. “I buried him in the botanical gardens next to Captain Hanson.”

McKinney began to weep. It did not make any sense to grieve over someone who he had never met or known, but the grief was real. And McKinney knew that he had found a connection with a man who could share his grief.

## Chapter 9

Commander Melanie Leeson and Lieutenant Commander Blake Adams entered Sickbay. The captain and ship’s CMO were standing over the biobed where Ambassador Sras of Andor lay unconscious.

“You’ve taken him out of stasis,” Leeson stated obviously.

Edward nodded. “And I have been able to stop the *Purple Death* from claiming his life,” she said. “The ambassador will make a full recovery within a few days.”

Leeson looked toward the other stasis chambers. “What about them?” she inquired.

“They will recover as well,” the doctor stated. “I’m going to release them from stasis and administer the same medication that I gave to Sras.”

“And where is the human?” Leeson asked, noticing his stasis chamber was empty.

“Yoshi has him in the Security section,” Stuart stated. “He’s interrogating the man now.”

“Maybe I can assist Yoshi,” Leeson said as she turned and left Sickbay.

Adams stayed and approached Stuart, who seemed to be standing a little closer to the doctor than normal. Blake planned on asking his friend and captain about that at a more opportune time. “Starfleet has dispatched the U.S.S. *Explorer* to take our guests back to the Federation,” he said. “A tug will come tow the *Kennedy* back as well.”

“How long until the *Explorer* arrives?” Stuart asked.

“About three days,” Adams replied. “Fortunately, she had just delivered a diplomatic team to Romulus and hadn’t left orbit yet.”

Stuart smiled and patted his friend on the shoulder, leading him away from the doctor, who was watching over the Andorian ambassador. “I wanted to thank you, Blake,” he said quietly.

“For what?” Blake was surprised.

“For sending Jan that rose.” Stuart paused as a smile began to form on Blake’s face. “You put me in a position to let down my guard and admit that I have feelings for her.”

“So,” Blake asked, “how do you feel?”

Stuart pondered. “More deeply than I dared to admit,” he finally said.

“And what about Janice?” Blake prodded.

“She cares deeply for me as well,” Stuart stated.

Blake grabbed his captain’s hand and shook it vigorously. “It seems that love has awakened in both of you.”

### Epilogue

Janice Edwards waited in the corridor. The door that she stood beside slid open, revealing Lieutenant Raymond Reynolds wearing a newly replicated uniform from his era. He stepped into the corridor, faced Edwards, and straightened his uniform.

“How do I look, Doctor?” Reynolds asked.

“Like a true Starfleet officer,” Edwards replied. “Have you decided what you want to do after getting back to Earth?” Edwards asked as she turned and slowly walked toward an open turbolift door, Reynolds walking beside her.

“I had a younger sister that I may try to look up,” he said. “I’ve been out of touch with society for a while,” Reynolds continued, “but I still want to make a difference.”

“Perhaps you can teach at the Academy,” Leeson suggested.

“I’m afraid that I’m too outdated to qualify,” he countered. “Today’s cadets probably know much more than I do.” Reynolds paused as he and Edwards entered the turbolift, the door sliding shut behind them.

“Transporter Room One,” Edwards instructed the computer.

“What could I teach *them*?”

The doctor placed her hand on the elderly man’s shoulder. “You could teach them the history of your time in Starfleet.”

Reynolds pondered Doctor Edwards’ suggestion. “You have given me something to consider, Doctor.”



Captain Stuart and Commander Leeson exchanged farewells with Ambassador Sras and his aids, now fully recovered from their encounter with the *Purple Death*. Stuart and Leeson watched as the Andorians dematerialized in the transporter beam.

“Did you ever find out who our would-be assassin is?” the captain asked.

Leeson frowned. He claims that his name is Ralph Cramer,” she said. “And he denies any involvement in the poisoning of the Andorians.”

“But I’m sure that you did some background checks through the computer files,” Stuart commented.

“I found some obscure information about his suspected involvement with a group that believes that they are protecting the Federation,” she said. “But I have my doubts.”

“Would this group be known as Section 31?” Stuart asked his first officer.

Leeson’s mouthed about dropped to the floor. “You know about Section 31?”

Stuart only nodded. “Is he off my ship?”

Leeson saw the concern on Stuart’s face. “Yoshi had him beamed directly to a cell in the *Explorer*’s brig.”

“Good,” Stuart said just as Edwards and Reynolds entered the room.

Reynolds immediately strolled behind the control console where CPO John McKinney stood watch. “I have requested that your grandfather’s belongings be transferred to your quarters and his service record be downloaded from the *Kennedy*’s computer records,” the older man said, extended his hand in friendship. “He was a good friend and a great man.”

McKinney grasped Reynolds’ hand and pulled him into a firm hug, acknowledging their shared bond with the late Donald Sims. “Thank you, Sir.”

Reynolds wiped a tear from his eye as he turned to face Stuart, Leeson, and Edwards. “Thank you for the steak dinner, Doctor.”

Edwards smiled and kissed the old man on the cheek. “Are you going to be alright?”

“I’m a man out of time,” Reynolds said. “It is like waking up from a sixty-year nap, but I think that I will be okay.”

Reynolds shook Stuart’s hand as he stepped up to the transport platform. “Thank you, Captain. For everything,” Reynolds said.

“Would you like us to relay any messages to other *Kennedy* survivors in case we run into them out here?” Stuart inquired.

Reynolds thought about all the good memories and the feelings of anger toward those that abandoned the captain and the few that decided to stay with the ship. “Tell them that the memory of the *Kennedy* lives on,” he said. “And the memory of the faithless has faded to nothing.”

With Raymond Reynolds last words spoken, Chief McKinney beamed the last crewman of the U.S.S. *Kennedy* to the starship *Explorer* for his return trip home.

Melanie Leeson turned to face Stuart and Edwards. “Do you think others from his ship might still be alive?”

Stuart thought about that. “Perhaps.” He smiled. “Maybe we’ll come across them if they found a planet along our path.” He turned and, followed by his first officer and CMO, exited the transporter room.



After the departure of the U.S.S. *Explorer*, the new *Ericsson*-class starship *Providence* jumped into warped space to continue its mission to boldly go into the unexplored regions of space and make new discoveries.