

\*Author's Note: This vignette takes place about three months after *To Boldly Go: Consequences of Conscience*.

## To Boldly Go: Birth Pains

A Personal Log

By Cleve Johnson

### 10 April 2379 (Stardate 56272.2)

Captain Rob Stuart, Commander Jan Stuart, and Captain Melanie Leeson materialized outside of Welva's capital city. The marble walls surrounding the city were 3 meters high and about one meter thick. As the trio approached the large golden doors that separated the outside from the inner court, the doors slowly opened. They saw Jovani, the guide who aided the *Monarch* as it traveled into previously unexplored space to rescue the crew of the starship *Columbus*. The Welvan approached, stopped a couple of meters in front of the Starfleet officers, and bowed in the traditional greeting.

Jovani smiled at his Federation friends. "Welcome to Welva. I am pleased that you decided to accept my invitation."

"The pleasure is ours, Jovani," Rob said.

Janice and Melanie looked at the surrounding countryside and at the city that stood before them. Janice held her ballooning belly as she felt the babies move suddenly.

Jovani noticed the Doctor wince. "Are you in pain, Doctor?"

"The babies are moving. They're pleased to be here, too." Janice forced herself to smile in spite of her discomfort.

"Perhaps I should take you to the lodgings that we have prepared. It is only a short walk."

"That might be a good idea." Jan took her husband's hand. "Will you help me, Rob?"

"Of course, honey." Rob slipped his arm behind his wife's back.

Melanie moved closer to her friends. "Maybe I should have Doctor Keegan beam down."

"No, I'm fine." Janice forced herself to stand erect. "I still have five or six days before they join us out here." She grabbed her abdomen suddenly and rubbed it as one of the babies kicked. "Ooh. Maybe you *should* have Doctor Keegan be ready just in case."

Melanie agreed and stepped away from the group to contact the CMO on the starship *Trailblazer*. Moments later, she rejoined the small group and put her hand on her best friend's back for comfort. "The doctor is on standby if you need him, Jan."

"I just might. These kids are starting to act impatient."

"Come on, let's get you into a nice comfortable bed," Rob said. "Mel?"



Melanie got under one of Jan's arms to help prop her up as Rob supported her from the other side. They started walking toward the city gates when Jovani stopped them.

"Your lodgings are this way." Jovani started walking toward the forest instead of toward the city gates. "The city has its wonders, but Welvan women journey back to the forest when their time comes."

Jan looked at Rob, and then at Jovani. "When their time comes? To give birth?"

"Yes. We believe that the forests are sacred and the only proper place for life to spring forth. That is why I asked you to be on my world for the birth of your children."

Rob and Melanie helped Jan walk in the direction where Jovani led. "I don't think I understand," Rob said. "I remember that you told us that our children would be special and that they had destinies to fulfill."

"They do. By being born on this world, they bring new life to Welva. You see, my people have not experienced the birth of twins in hundreds of years, and the birth of male and female twins has not happened in at least two millennia."

"So my kids are some sort of...divine epiphany?" Jan looked at Jovani with disbelief.

"They are not divine, but the birth of twins, especially male and female, signals new life to our world." Jovani paused as he took in the beauty of the forest that they approached. "Do you see the leaves changing color on their branches and those that have fallen to the ground? Our world is dying."

Melanie looked skeptical. "This sort of thing happens every year where we come from. It's the change of seasons."

"It is a change of seasons for us as well. It shows that the season of death is near. Welva's forest will eventually die, the grass will wither, and the waters will lose their purity unless twins are born to bring new life to the planet." Jovani turned as he led the trio into the wooded area. "Every few hundred years, our planet begins to die. If no twins are born to bring new life, the ground will begin to shake violently once the forests die, and the world will eventually tear itself apart. We started to feel minor tremors a few months ago."

Rob and Jan looked at each other with skepticism, but Rob tried to keep an open mind. The Welvans were a new civilization as far as the Federation was concerned, and he realized that the study of different cultures and beliefs is what brings knowledge. It was the reason that humanity went into space.



Jan looked out the window of the modest cottage. Noticing the trees, she marveled at the strange shape of the leaves and the variety of colors. Like on Earth, the leaves took on hues of orange and brown as they began to die and fall from the branches. Unlike the trees on Earth, which normally had green leaves, the Welvan trees had a greater variety of colorization when healthy. Some trees boasted purple leaves while others adorned themselves with blues or yellows. It was the most beautiful sight that Jan had seen on any planet that she had visited.



Jan began to rub her belly as the third contraction within the last hour hit. She turned away from the window and started toward the leaf-stuffed mattress on the floor when the earthquake struck. It was a minor tremor, so she kept her balance with little effort. Jan could not help but recollect Jovani's words the day before. She could not explain what was happening to this world, but she was not ready to believe in Welvan mysticism; however, her curiosity elevated every time her contractions seemed to correspond with the tremors.

Rob and Melanie entered the cottage. Rob smiled at his wife, offering his hand to help lead her to the makeshift bed. "You should be on your back and rest."

"Have you tried resting on that thing?" Janice pointed to the mattress in the corner.

Melanie took Jan's other arm. "Maybe Welvans don't concern themselves with comfort."

"Or Welvan women are made sturdier than human women." Rob immediately regretted his comment when he saw the glare that his wife shot at him. It was a good thing that Jan's eyes were not phaser beam emitters. He decided to try to diffuse the situation. "So, how are you feeling?"

"The bridge officer's test was a piece of cake compared to this." With Rob and Mel's help, Jan laid down on the mattress. She realized that it was not as uncomfortable as she previously thought, but the sound of crunching leaves inside the sewn cloth grated on her ears. "I wish these two would hurry up. Ooh!" Jan grabbed her abdomen again.

"What's the matter?" Rob kneeled by his wife, held her hand, and tried to comfort her the best that he could.

Another tremor, a stronger one, rocked the walls of the cottage. Jovani rushed into the one-room building and approached the three Starfleet officers. "The quakes are getting worse, and the leaves are changing color and falling from the trees more rapidly."

Melanie crossed her arms. "I'm willing to respect your people's beliefs, Mister Jovani, but I'm not sure that this little hut will survive these quakes if they get worse."

"I understand your misgivings, Captain Leeson, but the doctor is joining with the planet. Welva is experiencing the same birth pains that she is."

Jan reached toward her friend, tugging on her uniform pants. "It's okay, Mel. I'm staying."

"Jan, I don't think..."

"I don't understand it, but if what Jovani says is true, this world will be destroyed if I don't deliver the babies here."

Melanie shook her head. "At least let me get Doctor Keegan down here. Maybe he can help with your discomfort."

Jan smiled at her friend and nodded. "That might be a good idea, Mel."



The tremors continued with each contraction, but they subsided by the next morning within moments after the twins were born. Jovani opened the cottage door to let in the sunshine. Melanie took her eyes off the beautiful babies to look outside. Her mouth opened, but nothing came out of it. Jovani smiled; his face shone almost as much as the morning sun. The leaves changed to their healthy colors before Melanie and Jovani's eyes. Melanie whispered, "I don't believe it," but she could not offer any other explanation for what was happening in front of her.

"Would you like to hold one, Captain?"

"What? Hold one..."

"One of the babies." Doctor Michael Keegan wondered what distracted Captain Leeson. He beamed down the night before, so he did not see the condition of Welva as it was just hours before.

"Of course." Melanie glanced outside once more before turning toward her friends. She moved toward Rob, who held the little boy. "May I?"

Rob gently placed his son into Melanie's arms. "Here you go, son. Say hello to your aunt Melanie."

"He's so cute." Melanie tickled the baby's chin. "What did you decide to name him?"

Rob looked at Jan, who was holding the baby girl. "I made a deal with Jan. I name the girl, and she names the boy. She hasn't told me what she has decided yet."

Melanie looked at her friend lying on the Welvan version of a bed. "Well?"

Jan smiled, grateful that the difficulties of childbirth had passed. "Kevin Robert."

"Kevin Robert," Melanie repeated. She turned her attention to Rob. "And what did you choose for your daughter?"

"Kelly Elizabeth." Rob's face lit up. "Her middle name is in memory of my mother."

Jovani approached the officers and the two infants. He bowed to Robert and Janice. "Thank you for bringing life to our planet. Welva has been born once again." He backed away, allowing the Stuarts to see out the open door.

The beauty of the purple, blue, and green leaves, as well as the fresh spring smell, overcame the Starfleet officers. Janice still had no explanation for what she had witnessed or experienced, but she knew that having the babies on Welva was the right decision. She had shared her birth pains with this world, and she had been a participant in the creation of new life.

