

## **U.S.S. Trailblazer**

### ***Captain's Log: Stardate 56881.4***

*We are en route to the planet Ruhl to establish diplomatic relations with the planetary government. We had the good fortune to make first contact with the Ruhl people when we encountered one of their starships shortly after a quick survey of the planet Y'Kol. It was rewarding to meet others who value space exploration as much as the Federation does. The Ruhl that we met are humanoid in appearance with similar physical features as Earth natives except for a light orange skin tone. They seemed to be as curious about us as we are about them. If the rest of the Ruhl are like the ones we met, I believe that the Federation will have great success in our relations with them.*

Captain Melanie Leeson ended her log entry and rose from the chair behind her desk. She started toward the replicator when the chime announced someone was waiting outside her ready room door. "Enter," she said as she looked up to see who walked in after the doors slid apart.

Lieutenant Commander Victor Jacobs entered. He waited until the doors slid shut before speaking. "Got a minute, Captain?"

"Captain?" Melanie wrinkled her eyebrows. "You're being awfully formal aren't you, Uncle Vic?" Jacobs was not her uncle by blood, but he was a close family friend and watched Melanie Leeson grow up.

"Sorry, Mel," Jacobs replied. "I wanted to talk about ship's business, so I just thought..."

Interrupting, Melanie pointed to one of the chairs in front of her desk. "Understood, Lieutenant Commander." She turned back to the replicator. "Hot Chocolate. Extra sweet." She turned her head to face her chief of security. "Coffee?"

"No thank you." Jacobs was holding a PADD and lifted it to show his captain. "I wanted to go over some possible security upgrades with you if you have time."

Melanie sat in the other chair on the same side of her desk as Victor's instead of walking around and sitting in her chair. She tended to conduct her relationship with her crew with formal detachment most of the time, at least when on duty, but Vic was like family. Melanie preferred to keep her relationship with him more casual when others were not around. "Of course, I have time for you, Uncle Vic. What do you have in mind?"

"Well, I thought that we should set additional guards outside of crucial areas such as engineering, auxiliary control, and the bridge when we have guests aboard."

"You think the automated security protocols aren't enough?"

Vic tilted his head and smirked. "We don't know much about this sector yet. You never know when we'll meet people that aren't so friendly."

"Thinking about the Ruhl?"

"The ones we met seem friendly enough, but until we get to know them..."

Melanie shot a smile toward her security officer. “I was trained as a security officer, too, so I think what you propose is appropriate. But my instincts say that we’re going to have good relations with the Ruhl.”

“My instincts agree with yours, Mel, but there’s a lot of space out here, and history has shown that not every species is as nice as the Ruhl.” Jacobs stood up and grinned. “Don’t forget that this is the Enkar Sector, and Ruhl is not many light years outside of Enkara space.”

“Don’t jinx us, Vic,” Melanie said as she stood up to face Jacobs.”

The conversation was interrupted by a whistle from the com panel on the desk. Leeson pressed. “Leeson. Go ahead.”

*“We are receiving a distress call from an unknown vessel, Captain,”* Commander Shrev’s voice announced. *“There is an automated message that says the ship has lost warp drive and is on emergency power. Life support is failing.”*

“Do you have its position, Commander?”

*“Yes, Captain. It’s just outside of the Enkara Treaty Zone.”*

Melanie glared at Jacobs that told him that the unfolding situation was his fault for bringing up the hostile race that Captain Stuart had encountered the previous year. “Set course and engage at maximum warp, Shrev. Leeson out.”

Vic lowered his eyes and in a barely audible voice said, “Sorry.”

Melanie walked past him and started toward the door. “From now on, don’t speak the devil’s name.”

## **To Boldly Go: Rescue**

### *A U.S.S. Trailblazer story*

By Cleve Johnson

The *Pioneer*-class starship *Trailblazer*, one of the fastest Federation ships ever built, arrived at the edge of Enkara space. Fleet Captain Stuart had ordered the ship captains of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Exploratory Group to give a wide berth to Enkara ships and to stay at least two light years outside of the borders claimed by Enkar’s government in the recently negotiated non-aggression agreement; however, Leeson could not ignore a call for help if it came from a ship outside of Enkar space...even if it was less than two light years. As a Starfleet officer, it was her duty to render aide when possible.

Commander Shrev, the Andorian first officer, rose from the center seat and relinquished it to his captain. “Captain, we will arrive at the designated coordinates in less than two hours. I took the liberty of informing the Ruhl government that our arrival will be delayed.”

“Good,” Leeson said. “Lieutenant Commander Jacobs, please send a message to *Gateway Alpha* of our status. Send all logs as well.”

“Just in case we disappear?” Vic’s facial expression was partially jovial, partially cryptic.

“Just in case,” Leeson echoed.



As the *Trailblazer* came out of warped space and approached the alien ship, Melanie Leeson watched as the vessel grew larger on the viewer at the front of the bridge. “Lieutenant Commander Jaeger, any other contacts on sensors?”

“No contacts, Captain,” the science officer replied. “I’ve scanned the alien ship, and it has minimal weapons and shields. Both are powered down. The warp reactor is down, and the ship is drifting. Life support is on emergency backup power.”

“Hail them, Mister Jacobs.”

“Hailing frequencies open and the Universal Translator is engaged,” the senior security officer said.

“This is Captain Melanie Leeson of the United Federation of Planets starship *Trailblazer* responding to your distress call. How can we assist?”

After a few moments of silence, the reply came through minimal static. “*We have a plasma leak in our engine room, Captain. Three people are dead. We are losing life support.*”

“I will send an engineering team to your ship to see if repairs can be made to your systems. If necessary, are you and your crew prepared to evacuate and come aboard our ship?”

“*Yes, Captain, we are ready to evacuate. Please forget about the ship and take us with you. We must get away quickly.*”

Melanie looked at her first officer and nodded, and he took the cue by heading toward the turbolift to lead an away team to the disabled alien ship. “My first officer and his team will be there shortly, she said. “Why do you need to get away?”

“*The Enkara will be following. We need to escape their space.*”

At the mention of the Enkara, all the bridge personnel turned to look at their captain. Melanie met their gaze with understanding. “Stay alert, people,” she said. “Commander Jaeger, extend sensor sweeps. Commander Jacobs, go to yellow alert.”



Commander Shrev, two security crewmen, Lieutenant Commander Carmen Petroni (the *Trailblazer*’s chief engineer), three engineers, and Doctor Michael Keegan materialized on the bridge of the alien ship. Shrev counted eight aliens from three different species manning the control stations. He made eye contact with each one. “Who is the captain?”

The aliens shot looks at each other until one being, a humanoid male with sharp ridges running along his cheekbones, stepped forward. “We have no captain. We escaped from the slave labor camp on Enka-Ner,” he said. “I am Valik Tal from the planet Velanwar. Most of us are from there, but there are a few others from Pelax and Pelax Vas.”

“How many are on board?” Shrev tasked.

“Thirty escaped the camp, but three are dead. They were in the engine room when the doors automatically sealed them in when the main plasma conduit ruptured.”

“I’m a physician,” Doctor Keegan said. “Do your people need medical attention?”

“The rest of the people are in the cargo hold. Most of us are malnourished. A few have injuries given by the guards at the camp.” The alien former slave struggled to remain standing and started to lean on the nearest console. “Please help us.”

“Of course,” Shrev said. “We will do all we can to take care of your needs. We should get you all to our ship for medical treatment and food as soon as possible.” He tapped his communicator/Starfleet insignia. “Shrev to *Trailblazer*.”



Commander Shrev entered the bridge and approached the center seat. “Captain. I’m ready to give my report.”

“Go ahead, Exec,” Leeson replied.

The Andorian held a PADD up and glanced at it, but he already knew what he was going to say without reading from it. “There are twenty-seven survivors of mixed species. They said that they escaped from a slave labor camp on Enka-Ner. Apparently, the main plasma conduit ruptured in the engine room. Three people were killed. Doctor Keegan and his staff are examining all the survivors and treating those who show signs of brutality perpetrated by the guards at the camp.”

“How did they escape?”

“I haven’t had time to get all the details yet. I will set up interviews after they have been assigned quarters and have their basic needs provided.” Shreve handed the PADD to his captain. “Based on what I have been told, I suggest we take their ship in tow and move farther away from Enkara space.”

Leeson nodded and turned her head toward the CONN. “Ensign Rivers, prepare to get underway. Set course one nine seven mark three eight and standby.” Not waiting for the CONN officer’s response, the captain turned her attention to the OPS station. “Lieutenant Jaxx, lock on to that ship with a tractor beam.”

“Lieutenant Commander Petroni and a repair team on still on board the alien ship, Captain,” Shrev said. “She estimates the ship will be operational again within a standard day.”

“Excuse me, Captain.” Lieutenant Commander Jacobs, the ship’s chief of security, inserted himself into the conversation. “I suggest we blow the ship to make the Enkara think the escapees are dead.”

Shrev nodded. “Commander Jacobs makes a good point, Captain.”

“Agreed,” Leeson replied. “Belay the tractor beam, Mister Jaxx. Commander Shrev, have Petroni set the alien ship’s engines to overload and have her and her team beam back as soon as possible.”

“Aye, Captain,” Shrev replied. He turned and left the bridge.

“Captain, long-range sensors just picked up an Enkara battleship coming this way,” Lieutenant Commander Nora Jaeger said.

“How soon will they be here, Commander?”

“Three hours forty minutes,” Jaeger said. “Based on our information about their technology, I don’t think their sensors will detect us for another forty to fifty minutes.”

“Good. Ensign Rivers, as soon as our people have beamed back, go to warp seven.”

“Aye, Captain,” the pilot said as he worked the delicate controls.



### ***Captain’s Log: Stardate 56889.2***

*We have entered orbit around Velanwar, the planet where eighteen of the people we rescued come from. It turns out that one of the Velanwar former captives is the daughter of the planet’s prime minister. In gratitude for rescuing his daughter and the others of his world, the prime minister has invited me and my senior officers to be the official guests of his planet’s government to celebrate the return of the captives.*

The prime minister and several members of the government waited in the courtyard of the central government building in the capital city. All promptly came to a position of formal attention when the energy matrix of the transporter beam coalesced in front of them. Within seconds, Captain Leeson, Commander Shrev, Lieutenant Ezred Eedo, and Lieutenant Commander Victor Jacobs materialized.

“Welcome,” the prime minister said as he stepped forward and bowed. “I am Prime Minister Barta Frental.”

Leeson bowed respectfully, taking her cue from the prime minister’s example. “Captain Melanie Leeson of the United Federation of Planet starship U.S.S. *Trailblazer*. This is my first officer, Commander Shrev,” she said pointing to the Andorian. “Ship’s counselor Lieutenant Ezred Eedo, and my chief of security, Lieutenant Commander Victor Jacobs.”

“You and your crew have my gratitude and the gratitude of all the citizens of Velanwar,” The prime minister said. “I was hoping that you would have our people with you. I am anxious to

have my daughter back, and I know the other families are looking forward to being reunited with their loved ones.”

“They will be arriving shortly, Prime Minister,” Leeson said. “Our ship’s doctor wanted to make sure they are all in good health before beaming down.”

The prime minister tried to control his emotions, but his eyes started to well up with tears. “Thank you, Captain. I apologize for my lack of decorum, but I never thought that I would see Mreenes again.”

“I understand, Prime Minister.”

“Well, my personal wishes will need to wait a little longer. Please follow me into the government center. We have much to discuss.” The prime minister turned and started up the steps. Leeson and her officers followed him into the building as the other Velanwar dispersed.



The prime minister’s office was rather small for someone of his position. At least, that was what Captain Melanie Leeson thought. The one thing that impressed her was the variety of colors on the diagonally striped walls. The desk and chairs were made of material that looked similar to plastiform, a substance frequently used to create furniture on Earth and its colony worlds.

Prime Minister Barta Frental pulled a chair away from his desk. “Please be comfortable, Captain.”

“Thank you, Prime Minister.” Leeson accepted the invitation to sit down and waited for the leader of Velanwar to sit in his chair and present what he wanted to discuss.

The leader sat and crossed his hands on the desktop. “Captain Leeson, I want to thank you again for rescuing my people, especially my daughter. We first encountered the Enkara more than eight cycles ago, and we realized that they could not be trusted.”

The prime minister briefly gave Leeson the account of how one of Velanwar’s survey vessels had made contact with an Enkara warship and tried to communicate with its commander when the warship opened fire to disable the survey ship’s engines. The Enkara had boarded the ship and took several captives. Fortunately, another alien ship intervened and drove the Enkara vessel away.

“We don’t know where the alien ship came from,” Prime Minister Frental said. “We also don’t know where they went. The crew communicated by a text message, which our survey ship’s linguistic computer translated. Afterward, the aliens towed our ship back and deposited it into orbit and quickly left.”

“We would call them ‘good Samaritans,’ Prime Minister,” Leeson said. “You said that they sent a message. What did it say?”

Frental leaned back in his chair. “The message said to beware of the Enkara and to prepare to be towed back to your home world.”

“Anything else?”

“No other communication was given until they released our ship into Velanwar’s orbit,” Frental said. “As the alien ship left, it sent one more message: You are now safe.”

Leeson cocked her head to one side. “Odd.”

“Yes, it was, Captain. I wish we knew who our benefactors are, but they did not allow us the honor of thanking them.”

Leeson smiled. “Maybe they are just shy,” she said.

“Shy?”

“They probably wanted to avoid contact,” Leeson said.

“Then why would they intervene on behalf of our survey ship when it was attacked?”

“It’s a mystery, Prime Minister, but there could be a number of reasons that they helped your people. They might have been in conflict with the Enkara. They might have a strong sense of helping others in distress. We don’t really know.”

“And we may never know unless we meet them again,” the prime minister said. “But now, Captain Leeson, my world has a dilemma when it comes to the Enkara. My world only developed faster-than-light travel thirty-four cycles ago, and our curiosity brought us into contact with people hostile to us.”

“My people have had limited contact with the Enkara, but from what we know about them, they are hostile toward anyone they meet,” Leeson said. “After a couple of incidents with them, we recently were able to negotiate a non-aggression pact with them.”

“Are you their allies?” Fear appeared on the prime minister’s face.

“We are definitely not allies with Enkar, Prime Minister,” Leeson said, assuring Barta Frental of her goodwill. “We agreed to stay out of their space, and they agreed to leave us alone.”

Frental relaxed his demeanor. “Apparently, the Enkara did not agree to leave other races alone outside of their space.”

“I wish there was something that I could do to help, sir.”

“That is one of the reasons I wanted to speak to you, Captain.”



### ***Captain’s Log: Supplemental***

*Prime Minister Barta Frental has asked for protection of their survey ships from possible Enkara attacks. Although this is a request that Fleet Captain Stuart says may be outside of Starfleet’s purview at present, he has agreed to send Lirian Chen, the Ambassador-at-large stationed at Gateway Alpha, to Velanwar to begin talks in hopes that a formal alliance between the Federation and Velanwar might eventually be established, which could provide the protection that the prime minister has requested. Meanwhile, Captain Grey and the U.S.S. Monarch will rendezvous with the Trailblazer to transport the few Pelaxian and Vasi escapees to their respective planets so that we can continue our diplomatic mission to the planet Ruhl.*

Leeson ended her log and rose from her chair. She started toward the entrance to the bridge when the intercom beeped. "*Captain, you have an incoming message from Fleet Captain Stuart,*" the first officer's voice announced.

"I'll take it in here, Commander Shrev." Leeson returned to her desk and turned the desktop monitor toward her and tilted it up. "This is Leeson."

The monitor activated at the sound of her voice and Stuart's face appeared. He was sitting down. The painting of the starship *Providence* was on the wall behind him. "*Melanie, good to see you.*"

"Hello, Rob," Leeson replied. "You make it sound like we hadn't just talked twenty minutes ago. What can I do for you?"

*"I just wanted to let you know that Ambassador Chen has been briefed and will be leaving on a runabout for Velanwar within the hour,"* Stuart said.

"A runabout?" Leeson frowned. "That will take her a while to get there."

*"She knows that, but none of the starships are close enough to get back to Gateway Alpha and get her there any quicker."*

"I could provide transportation and get her there in less time."

*"You've already delayed your appointment with the Ruhl. We don't want to extend the delay any more than necessary,"* Stuart said. *"I think establishing good relations with them as soon as possible would be more advantageous."*

Melanie Leeson took a moment to consider what Stuart had said. "I see your point, Rob. Ruhl's proximity to Enkara space makes our diplomatic mission a higher priority," she said. Both Velanwar and Ruhl had the potential to become allies within the Enkar Sector, but Leeson's diplomatic mission to Ruhl needed to be her main concern. "I will get to Ruhl at top speed as soon as I meet up with the *Monarch* to transfer our guests."

*"Good,"* Stuart replied. *"My experience with the Enkara may prejudice me against them, but I think that we should do everything possible to keep them from expanding beyond their current borders."*

"Agreed," Leeson firmly stated. "I'll keep you in the loop. Please give my best to Jan and the kids."

"Of course. Stuart out."

Leeson turned off the monitor and started back toward the door, and the bridge on the other side of it, looking forward to the mission ahead.