

Stardate 56949.1

Space is big. A sea of stars with no end and no beginning. The immenseness of how big space is boggles the imagination, especially for someone in a small one-person vessel.

The two *Peregrine*-class fighters streaked through the endless blackness on a routine patrol near the planet designated as Xander's World, so named by its discoverer—Lieutenant Alexander Pierce—who had the good fortune to be manning the science station on the bridge of the U.S.S. *Raleigh* during a routine survey of the area.

“Thanks again, CAG, for letting me tag along,” Lieutenant William Powers said as he piloted one of the fighters. “It feels good to be in the cockpit again.”

“Not enough work to do in the legal office, Eagle?” Lieutenant Commander Kimberly Thomas, also known as the CAG of the 63rd Fighter Wing assigned to the U.S.S. *Monarch*, smiled as she teased the JAG officer who had once been her wingman during the Dominion War.

“I have plenty of work to do,” Powers said. “I just like to get out into open space occasionally. And I want to maintain my flight status...just in case.”

“Just in case?”

“I don't want to see us in another war, but conflicts will arise even when we don't want them to.”

“Unfortunate, but true, Eagle.” CAG remembered the time during the war when Powers had saved her life on more than one occasion and she had saved his a time or two as well. “Remember that time our squadron was preparing to attack the Jem'Hadar convoy near Setlik?”

“We were lucky,” Powers said. “Half of the squadron was lost that day, but in the end...”

“Hold on, Eagle,” the CAG interrupted. “I'm getting a recall signal from the *Monarch*.”

“Raptor leader, return to base at once. Lieutenant Powers is needed on board per captain's orders.”

“Acknowledged, *Monarch*.” CAG looked to starboard through the canopy window. “Head for the barn, Eagle. You're needed.”

“I hope that it's not someone who thinks amending a will is an emergency.”

The two fighters banked and set course for the U.S.S. *Monarch* at full impulse.



CAG and Eagle shut down the power to their *Peregrine* fighters and exited the ships as soon as the canopies opened. As they walked toward the hatch leading out of the main shuttle bay, Major Charles Craddock, the Starfleet Marines commanding officer and chief of security, approached the two pilots. Lieutenant Powers stopped and snapped to attention. “Major Craddock.”

“At ease, Lieutenant,” the major said. His facial expression revealed that there was a problem. “There’s been a murder on board, and you’re in charge of the JAG investigation.”

To Boldly Go: Legal Eagle

A U.S.S. Monarch story

By Cleve Johnson

Lieutenant Powers exited the turbolift and entered the bridge. He walked toward the center of the room and stopped as acting first officer Lieutenant Jennifer Mills turned her head to see him approach.

Mills didn’t get out of the command chair but acknowledged his presence with a nod and a smile. “Did you enjoy your flight?”

“It was exhilarating, Lieutenant,” Powers said. “Being out there brought back some memories.” He paused as his facial expression turned serious. “So, I hear that we had some trouble. Is the captain in the ready room?”

Mills glanced toward the door that separated the bridge from the captain’s office. “He’s waiting for you.”

Lieutenant William Powers walked to the door and pressed a button on the communications panel on the wall.

“Enter.”

The doors parted, and the JAG officer walked into the captain’s office. “Lieutenant Powers reporting as ordered, sir,” he said as the doors closed behind him.

“Have a seat, Mister Powers,” Captain Marcus Grey, the acting captain of the *Monarch* said. “I’m sorry to cut your patrol short, Lieutenant, but we have a problem.”

Powers thought that Grey’s wording was a gross understatement. “Who was the victim, sir?”

Grey, who was in operational command whenever Fleet Captain Rob Stuart was off the ship, placed his hands together as he rested his elbows on the desk. “Ensign Harold Cartwright from the engineering department.”

“I met him in 11-Forward last week,” Powers said. “He seemed like a good kid.”

“Commander Li said that Ensign Cartwright was an asset to his department and the ship. Our chief engineer is taking this rather hard,” Grey said. “Lieutenant, I want you to work with security to get to the bottom of this. We cannot have a murderer loose on this ship.”

“Understood, Captain. I’ll meet up with Major Craddock right away.” Powers stood up and came to attention. “Is there anything else before I get started with the investigation, sir?”

“Not at this time but please keep me informed on your progress, Lieutenant. Dismissed.”

Powers nodded and left the ready room. He entered the turbolift. “Computer, where is Major Craddock?”

“Major Craddock is in sickbay, deck 16.”

“Take me there.” Powers was surprised that with all the advanced thinking and cooperation in Federation society, violent crime was still an issue that plagued humanity as well as other sentient species. For a murder to happen aboard a Federation starship was even more unsettling. When the turbolift came to a stop, the young JAG officer exited and made his way to sickbay. He entered and saw the marine officer pacing back and forth in the waiting area. “Major Craddock,” Lieutenant Powers said as he approached the chief of security. “I just came from the captain and was wondering when would be a good time for us to start the investigation.”

Craddock stopped pacing and faced Powers. “I already started the investigation as soon as the body was found, Lieutenant.” The marine officer realized that he came across a little harsh in his tone and quickly forced himself to relax. “Sorry, Lieutenant. I’m not in the best of moods right now.”

“Understood, sir,” Powers said. “A murder on a starship is...well, it’s almost unheard of.”

“And it was on my watch,” Craddock stated. The veins on each side of his head started to show. He started to slow his breathing to will himself to calm down. “Mister Powers, I know that you have a reputation for getting to the truth in and out of the courtroom, but have you ever investigated a murder before?”

“No, but I have training and experience in criminal investigations, sir. I intend to find out who is responsible for Ensign Cartwright’s death and put that person away for a long time.”

“Let’s get it done quickly, Lieutenant Powers, because I for one don’t intend to let it happen again on this ship.”

Nurse Ingalls entered the waiting area, interrupting the conversation. “Major, Doctor M’Tan has finished the autopsy. As suspected, the ensign was stabbed, but she cannot determine the specific weapon used other than it was a sharp object such as a knife.”

Powers stroked his chin. “Where could a sharp knife be found on a starship?”

“The galley or armory are the only two places a sharp weapon would be located,” Craddock said. He didn’t want to think the murder weapon came from the armory, specifically the marine weapons vault, but only marines had old-style daggers as part of their arsenal, and then only for away team assignments.

Powers cocked his head to one side. “Replicators?”

“No,” the major replied. “Nothing sharper than a butter knife is allowed to be replicated without upper-level security authorization or senior officer approval.”

“What if the murderer is a senior officer...or a member of security?”

Craddock did not want to think that a member of his department—marines or Starfleet security personnel—would be the perpetrator, but he had to consider all possibilities. “Not likely, but we need to keep an open mind about potential suspects.”

“I’m not accusing anyone until we have more facts.” Powers thought about where to find those facts. “Where did not murder take place, Major?”

“The deflector maintenance room on deck 18. Ensign Cartwright was assigned to recalibrate the main dish after a malfunction was detected in one of the neural gelpacks.” Craddock added, “The room was thoroughly scanned.”

“Is it still sealed off?”

“We let maintenance get in to clean up the mess and then another member of the engineering department went in to complete the repairs that Cartwright was working on.”

“Do you know who was the last person to see Ensign Cartwright?”

“As far as we know, it was Commander Li,” Craddock said. “He sent the ensign to replace the gelpacks.”

“He’s probably blaming himself for what happened.” William Powers looked around sickbay and toward the door. Realizing that the answers he needed would not be found by standing around, he decided to make a trip to engineering. “With your permission, Major, I will have a word with Commander Li.”

“Of course, Lieutenant. I’m going to search the sensor logs to see if anyone else might have been seen near the murder scene about the same time as Ensign Cartwright.”

Both officers left sickbay and headed for their destinations.



Lieutenant Powers entered the main engine room and looked around. The sheer size was awe-inspiring, but his intent was on finding the chief engineer and not admiring the technology that surrounded him. He approached one of the technicians that were monitoring one of the multiple stations and asked her where the chief engineer could be found. After the tech pointed him toward the chief engineer’s office, Powers quickly made his way to talk with the subject of his search.

Commander Henry Li, the Monarch’s chief engineer, turned and rose from his chair when he heard the other officer enter. He offered his hand to the newcomer. “You must be Lieutenant Powers. I was expecting you.” Li tried to be cordial, but he could not smile. He had lost one of his engineers, and it had rattled him.

“Good to meet you, Commander.” Powers was aware of Li’s emotional state. He knew that a loss of this magnitude was painful. “I know this is hard to deal with, sir, but I need to ask some questions.”

“Anything I can do to help find Ensign Cartwright’s killer.” Li sat back in his chair and pointed to the other chair in the room. “Ask me whatever you need to.”

As Powers sat down, he activated the recording function of a PADD that he had brought. “I’m recording our conversation if that is alright.”

“Certainly.”

“Why did you send Ensign Cartwright to the deflector maintenance room?” Powers knew the answer, but he wanted to have a thorough account by the chief engineer on record.

“A routing diagnostic revealed that one of the gelpacks in deflector control had malfunctioned, so I sent him to replace it and check to related systems.”

“What time was that?”

“That was about 1450 hours, Lieutenant.”

“Did he go alone or was he part of a team?”

“I suggested he take one of the technicians with him, but he said that he could do it alone.” Li allowed himself to smile slightly as if he was a proud father telling of his son’s accomplishments. “I think that he wanted to show me how capable he could be, but I already saw his potential.”

“You were proud of him.” Powers didn’t need to say it, but he thought that Henry Li needed to hear it. When Li only nodded, Powers continued. “What about the people he worked with? Socialized with?”

“He got along with everyone on the job,” the chief engineer said. “I think he spent most of his time with Lieutenant J.G. Cohen when off duty.”

“Do you know Lieutenant Cohen?”

“He’s one of my best engineers. He nearly collapsed when he found out about Cartwright.” Commander Li crossed his arms. “I relieved him of duty and told him to see the ship’s counselor.”

“Did he?”

“He said that he would but needs some time to himself first.”

Powers tapped the Starfleet insignia on his chest. “Computer, where is Lieutenant J.G. Cohen?”

“Lieutenant Cohen is in his quarters.”

Lieutenant Powers stood. “Thank you for your time, Commander.”

“I’m available if you have more questions, Lieutenant,” Li said as he stood and shook the JAG officer’s hand. “I hope that you find Cartwright’s killer soon.”

“So do I, sir.” Powers turned and left the chief engineer’s office and made his way out of engineering.



Lieutenant Powers stood in the corridor pressing the intercom call button next to the door that would lead to Lieutenant J.G. Cohen’s quarters. After several seconds with no response, Powers tapped his combadge. “Computer, locate Lieutenant Cohen.”

“Lieutenant J.G. Cohen is in his quarters.”

Just then, the doors parted. Looking as if he had been in a fight with a Klingon targ, Cohen stood there with a bottle in his hand. “This isn’t a good time.”

“I understand that Ensign Cartwright was a friend of yours, Mister Cohen,” Powers said sympathetically. “I know that you don’t feel like talking, but I have to ask you some questions. May I come in.”

Cohen, mouth open, stared at Powers. After several seconds of silence, he managed to say, “Who are you?”

“Lieutenant William Powers. I’m conducting a JAG investigation into Ensign Cartwright’s murder.”

“You suspect me?”

“I don’t have any suspects yet, Lieutenant.” Powers waited for Cohen to say something, but the other officer pulled the bottle up to his mouth and took a gulp. Powers waited another moment before continuing. “I’m hoping that you might answer some questions that might lead to some answers about the ensign’s death.”

Cohen stepped back, almost stumbling, and motioned for Powers to enter. “have a seat.”

Powers sat down on the chair near one of the windows that provided a view of open space. He waited until Cohen sat down on the couch. “How well did you know Mister Cartwright?”

“We grew up together. We went to the Academy together. We were assigned to the same ship.” Cohen took another chug from the bottle. “I think I knew him pretty well.”

Powers pointed to the bottle. “Is that stuff helping get rid of the pain?” Powers pointed to the bottle.

Cohen looked at the bottle and looked toward Powers. He drank the remaining liquid and threw the empty bottle across the room where it broke into too many pieces to count. “Not really.”

“Look, Lieutenant.” the JAG officer wanted to help the other man get through the loss of his friend, but he also had a job to do. “I understand that you’re in pain, but I need anything you can provide to help me find his killer. Everyone on this ship is in danger until we catch him...or her.”

Tears started to stream down Cohen’s cheeks. “Everyone liked Harry. Who would want to kill him?”

“That’s what I want to find out,” Powers said. “I’m looking for a motive. A connection. Anything that might help.”

“I’m sorry, Lieutenant,” Cohen said. “I don’t know of anyone that would want to hurt him.”

Powers placed his hand on Cohen’s shoulder. “If you think of anything, no matter how small, contact me.” Powers stood and started for the door. He turned at the sound of his name.

“Promise me that you’ll catch....”

“I can only promise that I’ll do my best to find out who did this.” Powers left Cohen’s quarters and made his way to the nearest turbolift.”



Major Craddock stood in the security office and watched the monitor as the security record of the corridor that led to the deflector maintenance room replayed every moment leading up to when Ensign Cartwright entered the scene. “Replay at half speed.”

The monitor started from the beginning when the doors parted and Lieutenant Powers entered the room. “Pause playback,” Craddock said. “Get anything from Cohen?”

“He’s too shaken to be helpful right now,” Powers said. “What about you, sir? Anything useful from the sensor logs?”

“Not so far, Mister Powers.” Craddock turned his attention back to the monitor. “Computer, resume playback.”

Powers walked up to the security chief and stood by him, watching the monitor when he noticed something. “Did you see that?”

“See what?”

“Pause playback,” Powers said. “Back point one five seconds and replay at one-quarter speed.”

Again, the computer complied and started to resume showing the two officers the visual log. At the slower playback speed, Craddock and Powers noticed a blurred visual glitch.”

“Freeze image,” Craddock ordered. “Computer, why is there a blurred image at this time index?”

“The visual recording ended for fourteen point eight seconds and restarted.”



“Computer, why did the recording end?” Major Craddock’s neck started to itch, which is what usually happened when a situation did not ‘feel’ right.

“The recording was interrupted, and fourteen point eight seconds were reversed and restarted.”

Craddock and Powers turned to face each other. “Computer, who authorized the recording to be altered?” It was Powers who asked the question.

“Lieutenant J.G. Keith Cohen.”

“For what purpose?”

“Unknown.”

“Computer, is there any record of Lieutenant Cohen’s presence in the deflector maintenance room between the hours of 1400 and 1530?” Craddock was playing a hunch.

“Lieutenant Cohen’s access code was used at terminal alpha two at 1437 hours.”

Craddock tapped the Starfleet insignia on his uniform. “Gunnery Sergeant Mikovich, grab a couple of marines and meet me at crew quarters on deck fifteen portside, fifteen zero eight.”

“We’re on it, Major.”

Craddock, followed by Powers, was out the door of the security office and rushed toward the turbolift. He gave the command that would speed the two of them to their intended target. The marine officer and his JAG counterpart were out of the turbolift and in front of the doors that separated the corridor from Cohen’s quarters. The gunnery sergeant and two other marines— Lance Corporal Tyree and Private First Class Jones—were already by the door with phaser rifles powered up and at the ready. “I want this guy alive, Gunny.”

“Yes, sir,” Mikovich said. “Make sure your rifles are set for stun.”

Both marines glanced at the settings on their weapons and nodded.

Craddock had his sidearm in hand, ready for the suspected killer to resist. “Computer, release the door lock. Security override alpha two seven.”

The door parted and the three enlisted marines were the first to rush in. The room was empty. Gunnery Sergeant Mikovich nodded to the lance corporal, who took his meaning and made his way to the adjacent bedroom with his weapon at the ready. Tyree entered the room and looked around quickly. He then went to the bathroom and entered a security code on the wall console. “Clear,” Tyree yelled. “Major, you better see this, suh.”

Major Craddock and Lieutenant Powers came near to the door and peered into the bathroom. It was a horrible sight. Cohen’s body rested in the tub. Multiple stab wounds were evident, but the Starfleet officer had obviously not died instantly because he had used his blood

to write a message on the wall of the tub. It was a message consisting of one incomplete word—shapeshif—and the blood trailed off.

“Shapeshifter,” Powers said.

“Are the changelings breaking the armistice?” Craddock turned away from the victim.

Powers shook his head. “They’re not the only shape-shifting species.” Powers took a hard look at Cohen’s body when suddenly a thought came to him. “I wonder if I interviewed the Lieutenant or the killer.”

Major Craddock stared back at the body and noticed that Cohen’s uniform was missing the combadge. “Computer,” he said. “locate Lieutenant J.G. Cohen.”

“Lieutenant J.G. Cohen is in the main shuttlebay.”

“Security, intruder in the main shuttlebay. Send a squad.” The major looked at Mikovich. “Gunny, you and Tyree stay here and inform sickbay that there’s another body.” He turned to face the JAG officer. “Mister Powers, let’s catch a killer.” Craddock, followed by Powers, rushed out of Cohen’s quarters and down the corridor.



The marine squad entered the shuttlebay just in time to see a Peregrine fighter pass through the atmospheric force field. Within moments, Major Craddock and Lieutenant Powers were on the scene.

Craddock tapped the insignia on his chest. “Bridge, this is Craddock. The killer just left the ship in one of our fighters.”

“We’re engaging a tractor beam.” Only a second or two passed when Captain Grey’s voice spoke again. *“The tractor beam is not functioning, Major.”*

“I’m not letting him get away,” Powers said as he ran toward the nearest fighter. He quickly got into the cockpit and powered up the craft. The canopy was still closing as the fighter lifted off the deck and turned toward the clamshell doors that had remained open.

“Get him, Lieutenant,” Craddock whispered.



On the bridge, Marcus Grey watched the main viewer and saw the stolen ship head away. “Pursuit course, Mister Deneskos. Lieutenant Mills, lock phasers at one-quarter power and target the engines.”

Both the CONN officer and tactical officer acknowledged the captain’s order as the fighter increased its distance. On the viewer, Lieutenant Powers’ fighter appeared and could be seen gaining on the other small ship.

“Monarch, *this is Raptor 8. I’m moving into position and have a lock on the other fighter. Permission to engage.*” Lieutenant Powers wanted to blow the alien into millions of pieces, but he was too disciplined to allow his personal feelings to get in the way of his duty to try to capture the killer alive. And he wanted answers to who the killer was and why he killed two of the *Monarch’s* officers. Powers also knew that if he destroyed one of the *Raptor* Starfighter Wing’s ships, he would have to answer to the CAG. She was a friend, but Powers was not going to get on her bad side.

“Permission to engage hostile, *Raptor 8*. Target engines and weapons only,” Grey replied.

Lieutenant Commander Kimberly Thomas entered the bridge and stood next to the captain. “Sir, I have Aztec and Nova prepping to launch on your order.”

“Permission to launch.”

The CAG quickly strode to a mission operations station that was not in use and entered her security code to activate the LCARS interface. “*Raptor 2 and 4*, launch and intercept the alien thief who stole my fighter.” She turned toward the front of the bridge and watched as two more *Peregrines* sped to assist Powers in pursuit of the stolen ship.



Lieutenant Will Powers closed in on the alien. He adjusted the fine-tuned targeting controls and made sure that he would do as little damage to the fighter as possible. When the time was right, he hit the firing control and watched the phaser beam slam into the port impulse engine. The ship started to spin around, but with lightning speed, Powers got off another shot that disabled the main power generator so the alien could not fire on Powers. “Gotcha.”

The two other fighters approached Powers’ fighter and the one that had been stolen. “Raptor 2 to Raptor 8,” the fighter wing’s executive officer said. “*Good shooting, Eagle.*”

Powers smiled as he watched the alien-controlled fighter continued its spinning drift. “Thank you, Aztec. Do you want me to tow him back to the barn or would you like to do that?”

“*You did the hard work, so Nova and I will take it from here.*”

“Roger that. I’m heading back to base.”



Lieutenant William Powers and Major Charles Craddock sat next to each across the desk from Captain Grey. Craddock had just finished his report.

“Thank you, Major,” Grey said. “And what did you discover, Lieutenant?”

Powers leaned forward. “The alien claims to be a Fuval and is from a world called G’tonii. His people are shapeshifters and can absorb the thoughts and feelings of the people they imitate, which is why he was able to show such anguish about Cartwright’s death as he pretended to be Lieutenant Cohen.”

“Shapeshifters are hard enough to detect, but this species has that extra advantage,” the major added.

The lieutenant nodded and continued his report. “The Fuval are in the service of the Enkar. G’tonii is within Enkara space, presumably enslaved by the Enkara.”

Grey wanted to get to the details and find out the purpose of the intruder’s purpose for being on the starship. “What was he doing here?”

“From what we could get out of him,” Powers said, “he was sent by the Enkara to sabotage the ship. He was trying to cause a failure in the deflector array that would activate at high impulse speeds.”

“And that could cause major damage if it did not deflect even the smallest meteors and dust particles,” Grey said.

“And the alien admitted that Ensign Cartwright surprised him when he went to make the repair that was detected by sensors.”

“That explains the ensign’s demise, but what about Lieutenant Cohen?”

“Well, sir, the alien studied us for some time before making his move, and he had seen the friendship between Cartwright and Cohen. He chose Cohen to be the person to blame...as a distraction.

“How did he get on board?” Grey asked.

Will Powers said, “He said he got on board when we rendezvoused with the *Trailblazer* a few weeks ago and transferred the Pelaxians and Vasi to be dropped off at their home planets.”

“Are you saying that he was posing as one of the escapees that Captain Leeson rescued outside of Enkara space?”

“Yes, sir. He was posing as one of the Pelaxians.”

Grey crossed his arms as he frowned. “In the weeks that he was on board, he could have caused a lot of havoc.”

“Yes, sir,” Major Craddock said. “Commander Li has the engineering staff checking all systems and running sensor scans all over the ship to see if anything else has been tampered with.”

“Good,” Grey said. “Did the prisoner give any indication why he is being so cooperative since his capture?”

“He claims that he was threatened by the Enkara,” Powers said. “He said that he was afraid of what they would do to his family if he didn’t comply.”

“I’m not sure I believe that.” The marine frowned.

“Perhaps he is telling the truth, Major.” Captain Grey pondered the possibility for a moment, and then he smiled at the two men. “We will take him back to Gateway Alpha and let Captain Stuart and Commodore Sjögren decide if our prisoner is telling the truth or not. Both of you have done a fine job in wrapping up this incident. I will make sure that Fleet Captain Stuart is aware of your efforts.”

“Thank you, sir.” Powers rose from his chair.

“Yes, thank you,” Craddock said as he also stood to his feet.

“Dismissed.”

The JAG officer and marine officer left the ready room.”



Several hours later, Lieutenant Will Powers entered the shuttlebay and walked toward Lieutenant Commander Kimberly Thomas, who was overseeing repairs on her fighter. “Sorry about your ship, CAG.”

Thomas turned to face the approaching JAG officer. “You did what you had to, Eagle. Damage is a lot worse than it could have been. I see that your precision targeting skills are still with you.”

“Is there anything I can do to make it up to you?”

“Buy me dinner at that Bajoran Café when we get back to *Gateway Alpha*.”

“Be glad to.” Powers smiled and started to walk away when he stopped and turned back to face his friend. “Can we call it an official date?”

The CAG pondered the question momentarily before nodding her head. “Maybe.”

“Maybe is better than no,” Powers replied. “I’ll settle for that.”



Personal Log: Stardate 56953.6

The Monarch is on its way back to Starbase Gateway Alpha. Captain Grey informed me that my responsibilities are about to increase once I arrive, and Captain Jackson Andrews, the sector JAG out of Pacifica, will be there to brief me on the details. It has been decided that an extension JAG office will be commissioned at the starbase, and I am to be assigned as the officer in charge. A promotion to lieutenant commander, along with a small staff of lawyers and operational personnel, will be a welcome challenge. When I shared the news with the CAG, she said that it was alright for me to consider our upcoming dinner an ‘official’ date since we will now have the same rank. She decided that my new call sign will be ‘Legal Eagle.’ Maybe I will get used to it...eventually.