

Stardate 57012.4

Fleet Captain Robert P. Stuart sat behind his desk in his ready room aboard the U.S.S. *Monarch*, the flagship of the 3rd Exploratory Group. He watched the text scroll down on the monitor. He stopped scrolling when he came to the place where he had left off reading the previous evening. He started to read the next entry when he was interrupted by the high-pitched chime that indicated someone was on the other side of the door separating his sanctuary from the bridge. “Enter.”

The door opened to reveal Lieutenant Commander Jennifer Mills, the senior tactical officer and recently promoted second officer. “Sorry to disturb you, Captain, but you wanted to be informed when we arrived at Velanwar.”

“Thank you, Commander,” Stuart said. “Have we attained orbit?”

“Yes sir,” Mills replied. “Ambassador Chen has contacted us and provided her coordinates.”

“Very good.” Stuart stood and approached the other officer. “So, how are you settling into your new duties?”

Mills, very professional in her demeanor, let out a gentle laugh and smiled at her CO. “Very well, Captain. I’m adjusting, but there are a few challenges.”

“I think you’re up for it,” Stuart said.

“Yes sir,” Mills said. “You know that I love to be challenged.” She looked into her captain’s eyes. “I want to thank you for having confidence in me.”

“I’ve always been confident in you, Jen,” Stuart said. “You deserve the promotion and the added responsibilities.”

“I hope Commander Li doesn’t hold it against me,” Mills said as her face lost some of its enthusiasm.”

“Not at all, Jen,” Stuart assured her. “He never wanted his role as second officer. He said it got in the way of his position as chief engineer.”

“I’m glad to hear that.” Jennifer Mills’ smile returned. “If that will be all, I will inform the transporter room to beam up the ambassador.”

“Please let her know that I will meet her in the main conference room in about an hour.” Stuart returned to the chair behind his desk.

“Aye, sir.” Mills turned on her heel and exited the ready room.

Stuart started reading the text on the monitor. “Computer, resume scrolling one line per five seconds.”



To Boldly Go: Rendering Aid in View of the Prime Directive

A U.S.S. *Icarus* story

By Cleve Johnson

Captain's Log: Stardate 56961.4

After several days of mapping and surveying, sensors have picked up what appears to be a sub-light spaceship. The design is unknown, and long-range sensor scans indicate faint lifeforms. We have altered course to get a closer look. Captain Franklin Jeffers, U.S.S. Icarus.

Captain's Log: Stardate 56962.1

We have just dropped out of warp and taking closer scans of the alien ship. There has been no answer to our hails as yet. Sensors show a breathable atmosphere and faint life signs. My science officer believes that this might be a sleeper ship. The ship's projected course shows that at its current speed, it will enter Enkara space in a few decades. I am sending an away team to check out the ship. Captain Franklin Jeffers, U.S.S. Icarus.



Five beams of energy coalesced into the members of the away team. The leader, Commander T'Paski opened up her tricorder and starting scanning. Likewise, the exobiologist, Lieutenant J.G. Clay Thomas opened his tricorder and moved toward a control panel that was situated in front of two rows of tubular containers.

"Lieutenant Carter," T'Paski said, "please stay with Lieutenant Thomas and Doctor Pyle. Ensign Williams, come with me."

Lindsey Carter, the chief of security nodded and joined Thomas and the CMO, both of whom were taking scans of the control panel and the tubes. The other security officer, Ensign Greg Williams followed the first officer out of the large storage room.

Lieutenant Commander Jaimie Pyle had her eyes fixed on the tricorder readings. "These are stasis chambers. There are forty-two of them with occupants and eight that are empty."

Lieutenant Thomas nodded. "I've been able to download some of the files, but we'll need to run the records through the computer for a translation."

Pyle noticed that each tube had symbols painted on them, and each group of symbols was different. She surmised that it must be the alien's language, but she had no idea what the markings signified. She turned toward the security chief. "Lindsey, can you scan the marking on all the tubes over there?" Pyle pointed toward another row of stasis chambers.

"Glad to, Doc." Carter started toward the other side of the large room.



Commander T'Paski and Ensign Williams walked through the main corridor of the ship until they reached a hatch. T'Paski scanned it and a control panel on the wall next to it. "This appears to be the entrance to the bridge."

“How do we get inside?” Williams asked.

After finishing passing the tricorder over the control panel, T’Paski pressed one of two buttons, and the door slid open to reveal the alien ship’s control center. “There is no locking mechanism.”

The junior security officer reached into the utility pouch fastened to his belt and pulled out a palm beacon. He switched it on and looked into the dimly lit room. “It looks all clear, Commander.”

“Proceed,” T’Paski said.

Williams entered followed by the first officer. They both looked at the primitive flight controls and various stations in the small room. “Not very sophisticated.”

“Appearances can be deceiving, Ensign,” T’Paski said as she approached one of the consoles. “I believe that this is the main computer access terminal.” She pressed a few buttons on her tricorder to start downloading information. After a few minutes, she closed the tricorder and took another glance at the other consoles before turning toward the exit. “We should rejoin the others.”

T’Paski and Williams exited the control room. T’Paski turned and pressed the button that closed the hatch, and the two started back the way they came from. When they re-entered the room that they had beamed into, she approached the doctor. “Doctor Pyle, do you have anything to report?”

The CMO closed her tricorder and faced T’Paski. “We’ve finished our scans, but we need to get the language translated to understand it all.” Pyle pointed to one of the stasis chambers in the first row. “That one and the one next to it were the last ones sealed, so I’m guessing that this ship’s captain is in one of them.”

“I’ve downloaded information from the ship’s computer, and I believe that the linguistics database is included.” T’Paski motioned for the other members of the away team to approach. “We should be able to decipher the symbols on the chambers and any logs once we use the computers on the *Icarus* to analyze the information.”

The away team gathered close to each other in a circle as the first officer signaled the *Icarus* to beam them back.



Captain’s Log: Stardate 56962.3

Commander T’Paski and the away team have returned. The commander verified that this alien ship is indeed a sleeper with forty-two persons in suspended animation. The team downloaded the computer database to see what we can discover about the ship and its crew. The linguistic computer has translated the alien language, so we can discover the ship’s origin and destination. It appears the ship was launched nearly thirty years ago from a planet called Arolus. The intended destination is unclear. In fact, from the records, I’m not sure a specific destination was determined before the ship was launched. The ship’s computer seems to be programmed to scan any world with a compatible atmosphere and gravity for its occupants, and then wake the

commanding officer and medical officer to determine if the discovered planet is worth investigation. If the CO determines that the planet is worth exploring, he will then alter course and wake the remaining crew shortly before entering the planet's orbit. My science officer and his team are reviewing the alien records for further information. I'm sending a message to Fleet Captain Stuart with my previous logs and a copy of the alien database. I am asking permission to divert the alien ship from its current course so that it stays clear of Enkara space. Some might think this is a violation of the Prime Directive because this ship is from a pre-warp society; however, the ship's computer records show that the people from Arolus have been visited by starships from other worlds, so they have had first-contact experiences already. I don't believe that reprogramming the sleeper ship will be a violation. I have explained my reasoning to Captain Stuart, so I hope that he agrees. Franklin Jeffers, U.S.S. Icarus.

Captain's Log: Stardate 56964.2

Captain Stuart replied to my message, and he agrees that reprogramming the alien ship to avoid Enkara space would not violate the Prime Directive. He was very supportive of my recommendation and seemed...happy that the Enkara would not have a chance to claim any slaves from this ship. I have sent my science officer, Lieutenant Commander Farris, and a team of computer specialists back to the sleeper ship to reprogram the guidance controls. Captain Franklin Jeffers, U.S.S. Icarus.

Captain's Log: Supplemental.

For a pre-warp civilization, the Arolus have a sophisticated computer system that our specialists cannot seem to gain access to the navigation program. It is encrypted with an algorithm that has stumped all my people. I have sent Commander T'Paski, my first officer to assist. She holds an A-7 computer rating, so if she can't access the program, no one else on the Icarus will be able to. Jeffers, commanding Icarus.



The Vulcan first officer, Commander T'Paski, continues to study the readouts on her tricorder. She entered information on the alien computer control panel, but she still could not gain access. If she was frustrated after the ninth failure to gain computer control, it was not evident to the others that were diligently trying to access other systems in the control room. Out of the corner of her eye, T'Paski noticed the approach of one of the members of the away team. She turned to face her. "Yes, Chief?"

The computer technician, Chief Petty Officer T'Bree, also Vulcan, stood with her hands behind her back. "Commander, I regret that I have not yet made progress toward accessing the Arolus navigation computer."

"I, too, have not achieved my goal," T'Paski replied. "Continue your efforts, Chief T'Bree. I will go to the main computer core access control room to see if the navigation sub-processors can be accessed or bypassed."

"Yes, Commander," the other Vulcan said.

T'Paski turned and exited the main control room and walked through the corridor until she reached a hatch in the floor next to the portside bulkhead. She reached up and pressed one of the buttons on a control panel on the wall above the hatch. The hatch opened by sliding under the

floor to reveal a steep set of steps going to the next deck below. She walked down and continued aft until she reached the end of the corridor.

She touched the control panel next to another hatch that opened to reveal a large room full of databanks, panels, and other electronic equipment. T’Paski had been in this room once before shortly after she came back aboard the alien ship. She admired the simple layout of the room and the sophisticated technology of the Arolus computer design. Its level of sophistication was impressive and beyond what T’Paski would have thought a race that had not yet attained warp drive could achieve, but she knew that not all species focused on the same technologic advancements. Perhaps warp drive was not a top priority for the Arolus.

She scanned all of the consoles and computer memory storage. After several minutes, she tapped the Starfleet emblem on her chest. “*Icarus*, I am ready to return.” The transporter beam coalesced around her, and she was whisked away.



Captain’s Log: Stardate 56964.8

T’Paski was unsuccessful in getting into the navigation program. She has determined that we could disable the computer, but that it would probably create a complete shutdown of all systems, including life support and the cryogenic tubes, which would kill the aliens. The other possibility is to awaken the commanding officer to reprogram the guidance controls. T’Paski believes that waking any member of the crew would be a Prime Directive violation. However, I cannot, in good conscience, let this ship get closer to the Enkara border, but my first officer advises that we let the ship stay on course since it will be decades before the ship reaches Enkara space. Who’s to say that the Enkara won’t detect it and capture it? I need to consider my options. Jeffers, in command of Icarus.



T’Paski entered the bridge and approached the captain. “Sir, the Arolus computer system is surprisingly more advanced than their other technology.”

Captain Franklin Jeffers had not his first officer to show any emotion, but he detected just a hint of irritation in T’Paski’s voice. “You couldn’t break the encryption?”

“I have been able to access all files except for the navigation files and controls. The encryption protocols are unlike any that I am familiar with.”

“Have we identified which stasis chamber the commanding officer is in?”

“Yes, Captain,” T’Paski said. “Are you suggesting that we wake him?”

“I don’t see that we have a choice, Commander.”

“Sir, I understand that you do not wish for the Arolus to enter into Enkara space; however, it will take...”

Jeffers interrupted. “Please do not tell me how long it will take down to the twelfth decimal place,” he said wryly.

T’Paski’s left eyebrow raised quizzically. “...several decades,” she said slowly. “There are always alternatives, Captain. We may still be able to find the encryption code.”

Jeffers stood up from the command chair and faced his first officer. “Commander, if you haven’t cracked the codes in the past two hours, then it’s not going to happen.” The captain smiled. “And yes, that was a compliment and an expression of my faith in your abilities. No one else on this ship can do it.”

“Captain, the Prime Directive...”

“...doesn’t apply, Commander,” Jeffers said as he shook his head. “The records that you downloaded earlier clearly show that the Arolus are not only aware of other sentient life on other planets but also that they have had visitors from spacefaring civilizations. And I checked with Captain Stuart.”

“Sir, you received a message from the fleet captain that it would not be a Prime Directive issue to alter the course of the alien ship,” T’Paski stated firmly. “I do not recall that he gave permission to wake the aliens.”

“Your objection is noted, Commander.” Captain Jeffers lowered his head slightly and stared into his first officer’s eyes to indicate that his mind was made up.

T’Paski placed her hands behind her back and gave a brief nod. “Understood, Captain.”

Jeffers relaxed his posture. He wanted to place a comforting hand on his first officer’s shoulder, but he knew that Vulcans did not like to be touched. It was a cultural taboo. “As the first officer, you are right to object, and I thank you for doing so,” he said, “but someday you will have your own command. You will then be responsible to interpret orders and evaluate whether the Prime Directive applies or not. This one is my call, and I will take the flack if I’m wrong.” He paused to see if his first officer had a reply. When none came, he turned and started for the turbolift. “I’m going over there. Have Doctor Pyle and a couple of security guards meet me in Transporter Room One. You have the bridge.”



Captain’s Log: Supplemental.

Against my first officer’s advice, I went on board the sleeper ship and ordered that the alien commander be awakened. Since we already had the language-translation matrix programmed into our universal translator, we were able to communicate with the alien. I think that T’Paski was surprised that the alien did not seem to fear us even though we must have looked as strange to him as he was to us. I was able to explain the situation with the Enkara, so the alien entered his computer codes to adjust the ship’s heading. I offered to take him and his crew back to his homeworld, but he declined, saying that he and his people were on a journey to find a new home where they could be free from oppression. I asked him about his planet, but he would only say that the people had lost their way, so I did not inquire further. Since we are only a few light-years from Arolus, I think I will take a closer look to see if I can get an understanding of the society that the alien commander and his followers wanted to get away from. Captain Franklin Jeffers, U.S.S. Icarus.



“Computer, pause display,” Stuart said. He pressed the com panel embedded into his desk. “Bridge, contact the *Icarus* and put me on a secure channel.”

“*Yes sir,*” Lieutenant Commander Mills’ voice replied.

Stuart got up and went to the replicator. “Apple Cinnamon Tea; hot.” He took the steaming mug after it appeared and lifted it to his face. After he inhaled deeply, he took a sip. He went back toward his desk and set the cup down. As he sat down, the intercom chirped.

“*Captain Jeffers is waiting, sir.*” Mills’ voice announced.

“Thank you, Commander.” Stuart pressed the communication control. “Captain Jeffers, good to see you again.”

“*Thank you, Captain Stuart,*” Jeffers replied. “*How may I help you?*”

Stuart noticed that the other man’s facial expression seemed tense. Stuart wondered if Jeffers might be thinking that he was in trouble for his actions concerning the sleeper ship. “I’ve been reviewing your logs regarding the Arolus sleeper ship, and I want you to know that you did the right thing. However, even though you didn’t violate the Prime Directive, you did bend it.” Stuart let Jeffers ponder that statement before continuing. “Just so you know, I would have done the same thing in your situation.”

The image of Captain Jeffers relaxed as he dropped his head and quickly looked up again. “*Thank you, Captain. I thought I did the right thing, but I’m happy you agree.*”

Stuart smiled. “You did look a little worried a moment ago, Franklin,” Stuart said. “I had another matter I wanted to discuss with you.”

“*Of course.*”

“I have been looking at the recent crew evaluations that you sent last month, and I see that you have recommended Commander T’Paski for promotion and a command when one was available.”

“*I believe that she’s ready, but I know that she will be hard to replace.*”

“Well, start looking for a replacement, Franklin, because I have already forwarded your recommendation and included one of my own to Admiral Montoya,” Stuart said. “I’m sure that he will approve her promotion, and I am assigning her to the U.S.S. *Starquest*. It’s an older ship—*Explorer* class. It’s been out of service for years, but it has been recently refit and is docked at Gateway Alpha awaiting a captain and crew.”

“*She will be happy to hear that...well, she would be happy if she wasn’t a Vulcan.*”

Stuart couldn’t help but laugh. “I’ll expect you to head back to the starbase so she can start familiarizing herself with the ship. After seven months, you and your crew are probably needing some R and R, too.”

“*I can’t argue with you on that, Robert.*” Jeffers paused. “*Between you and me, what sold you on promoting T’Paski at this time?*”

“Her record speaks for itself, but I was impressed with her standing up to you about waking up the aliens on that sleeper ship.”

“She didn’t back down on her position, but she still followed orders despite her concerns.” Jeffers smiled. *“She still hints that I might have been wrong in waking the alien commander.”*

“Then she probably thinks that I would be wrong too since I would have the same thing in your place,” Stuart said. “I like it when people under my command aren’t afraid to tell me when they disagree with me. Keeps me on my toes.”

“She’s good at keeping me on mine,” Jeffers said. *“Well, if there is nothing else, I need to turn my ship around and head for the barn.”*

“Remember to stay clear of the Enkara border, Franklin. I have a feeling that they are up to something.”

“I read Captain Grey’s report on what happened aboard the Monarch,” Jeffers said solemnly. *“You think they’re going to break the non-aggression pact?”*

“I don’t know, but I have a gut feeling that something will happen.” Stuart forced himself to give Captain Jeffers just a hint of a smile. “Maybe I’m wrong.”

“From what I’ve heard, you rarely are.”

“Thanks. I feel better already,” Stuart said sarcastically. “You and your entire crew will be on fifteen days shore leave once you get back. I’ll have a temporary skeleton crew assigned to provide maintenance and keep your ship ready while you and your crew are on leave.”

“I appreciate that,” Jeffers said. *“We’ll see you in a couple weeks. Jeffers out.”*

Stuart stood and headed for the bridge. Once he entered, he surveyed the officers at their stations.

Lieutenant Commander Mills, sitting in the command chair, glanced over her shoulder when she heard the parting of the doors that led to the ready room. She immediately stood and turned to face her CO. “Captain on the bridge.”

“As you were,” Stuart said so he would not intrude upon the duties of the bridge crew. He stepped toward his second officer. “Anything to report?”

Mills relaxed her posture. “Maintaining standard orbit. Captain Grey and Doctor M’Tan’s runabout should rendezvous with us in about eight hours. Ambassador Chen has beamed on board and been assigned quarters. She’s anxious to talk with you, sir.”

“Very good. Please escort her to the main conference room,” Stuart said. “I’m eager to hear about her mission.”

“Yes sir.” Mills watched as Stuart made his way toward the conference room and disappear behind the closing doors.

To be continued...