

To Boldly Go: A Bit Overwhelmed

A Personal Log

By Cleve Johnson

Stardate 57341.8, 0810

Admiral Erik Sjögren entered the main medical facility and was greeted by one of the medics manning the desk in the waiting area. The medic stood and snapped to attention, but the admiral held up his hand. “At ease, petty officer. Is Doctor Stuart here?”

“Yes sir. She’s in her office, Admiral.”

“Anyone with her, son?”

The young medic grinned slightly at the admiral’s use of a familiar term that reminded him of his grandfather. “No sir. She just arrived a few minutes ago and hasn’t started rounds yet. I’m sure it would be fine to just go back.”

“Thank you, son.” Sjögren nodded to the young man and made his way down a corridor to the CMO’s office and stood at the doorway. “Good morning, Doctor. Mind if I come in.”

Janice Stuart looked up from her desk and smiled. “Admiral! What brings you here?” Are you feeling...”

“I’m fine, Janice. I wanted to see if there was anything wrong with Robert.”

“Rob?” Jan’s forehead wrinkled as she frowned. “Why do you ask?”

The admiral sat in the chair across the desk from the doctor. “He wasn’t at breakfast this morning, so I wondered if he was ill or if anything was wrong.”

“That’s not like him. He always looks forward to breakfast with you every week.”

Sjögren leaned forward. “We’ve met every Wednesday at 0700 for breakfast except for when he’s away on a mission, this is the first time that he hasn’t shown up.”

Jan felt perplexed by the situation. “He left our quarters at 0640, which is a little sooner than he normally does, but he said that he needed to get an earlier start. I just assumed that he was meeting you earlier than normal.

Sjögren sighed. “Lately, he has seemed, well, a little different than usual.”

“Now that you mention it, he hasn’t been acting like himself,” Jan said. “He has been leaving early and getting home late most days for almost the past couple of weeks. When I ask him if everything is okay, he just says that he has lots of work to do.”

Sjögren was reluctant to say what was on his mind, but he figured that the doctor would let him know if his question was inappropriate. “I know this might be too personal, but is everything well with you two? Any issues?”

“No problems between us, Erik. He just seems...”

“...aloof?”

“Yes, that is one way to put it,” Jan said. “He’s been out of sorts lately.”

The admiral tapped the Starfleet symbol on his chest. “Computer, locate Captain Stuart.”

The feminine voice replied with just a hint of a mechanical voice. “*Captain Stuart is in his office.*”

Sjögren smiled at the doctor. “I think I’ll drop in on him for a little talk. Unannounced, of course.”

“Thank you,” the doctor said, the sound of relief in her voice.

The admiral left and made his way out of the medical center and toward the turbolift nearest to his location.

Within moments, he exited the lift and walked through the curved corridor until he arrived at the Office of the 4th Fleet, 3rd Exploratory Group. Entering, the admiral acknowledged the presence of Lieutenant Richard Baker, Fleet Captain Stuart’s aide. Sjögren stopped Baker from standing up with a shake of his head. “No need to get up, Lieutenant. I’m here to see the boss.”

“I’ll let him know that you’re here,” Baker said as he pressed the touchpad on his desk. “Captain Stuart, Admiral Sjögren is here to see you.”

“*Send him in, Richard.*”

Sjögren thanked Baker and started toward the door to Stuart’s office.

Stuart looked up from his desk monitor and stood as the door opened to admit the admiral. “Good morning, Erik. What brings you to my door?”

Sjögren smile and walked straight to Stuart’s desk and sat down. “I was just wanting to see if everything was alright in your world.”

Stuart gave a quizzical look. “I’ve just been busy. Reviewing logs. Keeping track of ships. Writing reports.”

“You *have* been busy, Robert,” Sjögren said. “That explains why you missed our weekly breakfast.”

Stuart’s mouth dropped open. “Is today Wednesday? I’m sorry, Erik. I was so caught up in getting an early start on work...”

“Don’t worry about it,” Sjögren said. “It’s just a missed breakfast, but it seems out of character for you to not remember what day it is.”

Stuart nodded. “I have to admit that I have been so busy that my mind has been preoccupied.”

Sjögren smiled. “Didn’t you tell me that Captain Thorpe has been nagging you about taking some time off?”

“For the last four months,” Stuart said, smirking. “I can set my chronometer to the reminders that she sends every three days with her reports.”

“Did you ever think that if you take her advice, you wouldn’t get those reminders?”

Stuart thought the admiral’s point was worth considering, but then he said. “Too much is going on, and I’m behind on my reports to Admiral Montoya.” I can’t afford to take time off right now.”

Sjögren shook his head. “I’m not a trained counselor, but you haven’t been yourself lately. I think that you have the beginning signs of burnout.”

“I may be a bit overwhelmed, Erik, but I’m not burned out.”

“Not yet, but you’re on your way if you don’t take some time off. Soon.” The admiral’s eyes bore into Stuart’s.

“I hear you, Erik, but...” Stuart’s shoulders slumped as his eyes dropped to look at his desk. When he looked up again, he said, “I’m tired. I know I need a rest, and I want to get away with Jan, but with all this responsibility...”

Sjögren turned his head toward the door. “On the other side of that door is your aide, and I’m sure that you can delegate some of your responsibility to him.”

“Richard does a fine job, but he is a lieutenant,” Stuart said. “

“Promote him,” Sjögren said. “He’s probably due. Do you even know when he received his last promotion?”

Upon hearing the admiral, Stuart had an *aha* moment. “I never thought about that, Erik. I haven’t even taken the time to read his Starfleet record.”

“Maybe you should.” Sjögren stood up and pulled down his uniform jacket. “You’re not in my chain of command, Robert, but if you were, I would order you to take two weeks off and get away from here. Take your wife with you because she can use the break, too, now that she has a full medical staff.”

Stuart started to respond but was cut off by the admiral.

“And if I was you, I’d get a medical checkup just so you know that what I am giving you is sound advice.”

Stuart tried to portray a relaxed posture and offered a slight but forced smile. “Okay, Erik. I’ll get to the *Monarch*’s sickbay and have Doctor M’Tan give me my semi-annual physical. I’m a week overdue for it anyway.” He looked at the serious look on Sjögren’s face. “And I’ll schedule a week’s leave.”

Sjögren shook his head. “I recommended two weeks, and that is what I’m granting your wife, so I suggest that you contact Admiral Montoya to let him know that you are taking a little vacation.”

Stuart's half-hearted smile quickly turned sour. "Okay, you win. I will take two weeks. Jan has been saying that she would like to go to Pacifica."

"Good. We'll have breakfast on Wednesday after you return," Sjögren said. "And I think that you should make a priority of looking into your aide's file. I suspect that he is fully capable of handling more than you're letting him do." Without another word, the admiral smiled and turned toward the door, exiting as it opened for him.

As soon as the door whooshed shut, Stuart tapped his combadge. "Stuart to Doctor M'Tan."

"Sickbay. This is Doctor M'Tan. How may I be of assistance, Captain?"

"I believe I'm overdue for my physical, Doctor. Do you have time for me today?"

After a few seconds of silence, the Vulcan chief medical officer answered. *"Would you be available at 0915 hours, sir?"*

"I will be there. Stuart out." Stuart turned back to his computer console. "Computer, display Starfleet record for Lieutenant Richard Baker currently assigned as my personal aide."

The monitor changed from the report that Stuart had previously been working on before the admiral arrived to display Baker's record. Stuart quickly looked through it and noticed two things of interest. One was that Baker had last been promoted to the rank of lieutenant on Stardate 54078.9, more than three years ago. The second point of interest Stuart noticed was that Baker had some command experience. He had led four away missions when assigned as a junior officer aboard the starship *Fearless*. He had led a rescue mission, during the war, to retrieve several captives from a Cardassian labor camp and three covert surveillance missions. He even received a special commendation for his actions.

After seeing the file, Rob Stuart realized, as Admiral Sjögren had speculated, that Lieutenant Richard Baker indeed could handle more responsibility...and a promotion was more than warranted. He decided to turn some of the past-due reports over to his aide. He tapped his combadge again. "Stuart to Baker. I'm going to take a two-week leave, so I need you to run the office and coordinate operations with the 3rd while I'm gone. Are you up for it?"

"My pleasure, Captain Stuart," Baker's enthusiastic voice replied.

"I'm going to the *Monarch* to have my routing physical in few minutes. When I return, I'll go over the detail with you."

"I look forward to it, sir."

"Stuart out." He ended the transmission and leaned back in his chair, grateful that Erik Sjögren had visited. He decided that he should probably let his wife know that they were going on vacation, so he tapped the Starfleet insignia on his chest once more. "Stuart to Medical Bay One."

The End