

To Boldly Go: There's No Easy Way to Share Bad News

A Personal Log

By Cleve Johnson

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Captain Robert P. Stuart had entered his office and greeted his aide, Lieutenant Richard Baker. "Good morning, Richard. Any problems while I was away?"

"Good morning, sir," Baker replied. "No problems to report. I prepared a summary of the status for each of the ships and the reports have been completed and await your approval before sending them to 4th Fleet Headquarters. And The U.S.S. *Eclipse* arrived yesterday. Captain Storan would like to meet with you at your convenience."

"Contact Captain Storan and ask if he can meet me in my office at 1300. Also, would you mind contacting Admiral Sjögren to see if he's available for lunch today?"

"I will be glad to do that, Captain."

Now that the formal greeting and quick synopsis of the business at hand had been concluded, Stuart relaxed and sat on the edge of Baker's desk. "So how did it feel to be the point of contact for all those ship captains?"

"Honestly, sir, I was a little nervous at first. I kept wondering when a crisis would spring up with one of the ships, but after a week went by, I realized that there was no need to worry because whatever was going to happen would happen, and I would deal with it as necessary."

"How would you feel about taking on more responsibilities?"

"I think I can handle more, sir."

"Good," Stuart said as he stood up. "I will be giving you more."

Lieutenant Baker smiled. "I look forward to it, sir. Oh, I almost forget to tell you that you have a private communique from Commodore Gardner."

"I've not heard from Chuck Gardner in over a year," Stuart said. "I think I'll start with that before reviewing those reports." He started toward his inner office.

"Sir?"

Stuart stopped and turned to face his aide. "Something else, Richard?"

Baker smiled at the captain. "Did you and Doctor Stuart have a good time on Pacifica?"

Stuart nodded and smiled. "Yes, Richard. It was very enjoyable. But it was the doctor's first time away from the twins for more than a few hours. The first couple of days were a little rough, but she made it through."

"It's good to have you back, sir."

“Thanks, Richard. It’s good to be back,” Stuart said as he turned and continued into his office.

He went to the replicator and had the computer create a hot cup of apple cinnamon tea and took the cup to his desk. He sat down, took a sip of tea, and activated the monitor. “Computer, open transmission from Commodore Charles Gardner. Code Stuart Alpha One.”

The image of Rob Stuart’s friend and former captain appeared. The commodore’s face appeared dour. “*Rob, there is no easy way to share bad news, so I’ll just spit it out.*”



Stuart entered his quarters where his wife was holding their little girl. He tried to smile as he saw her try to squirm to get away from her mother. Both of the kids had been struggling to show some independence since they had started walking a few weeks ago. Robert looked at his wife and attempted to keep a neutral expression, but he couldn’t. “Where’s Kevin?”

“He’s taking a nap, but this little one isn’t quite ready.” Jan smiled at her husband. “What are you doing here? Not enough work?”

Stuart walked over and sat down next to his wife on the couch. “I received a message from Chuck Gardner, and...

Jan saw Rob’s anguished face. A tear glistened in his eye. “What’s wrong, Rob? Did something happen to the *Providence*?”

Rob shook his head. “Not the *Providence*,” he said. “Jan, the *Republic* was transporting supplies and equipment to P’Khati to aid the Runii with their rebuilding efforts, but...it never arrived.”

“Are they searching for it?” Jan feared for the crew of the *Ambassador*-class ship that had been her husband’s post as the first officer before he was promoted and given command of the first *Providence*. She knew that he had several colleagues and friends that were still part of the *Republic*’s crew, and her ex-husband was now its captain. She feared the worst, and Rob’s expression confirmed her fear.

“The *Majestic* found her. All that was left was a debris field.”

Jan gasped. “Were there survivors?”

Rob shook his head. “No trace of survivors. And no indication that any shuttles or escape pods were launched.”

“Paul,” Jan whispered. Paul Edwards had been placed in command of the *Republic* a little over a year ago after he had finished his tour serving as the first officer of the *Trailblazer* during its first mission. “What happened?”

“Chuck has his best people investigating and according to preliminary findings, it looks like the ship was attacked. Residual sensor readings indicate that the ship was hit multiple times by some type of disruptor weapon.”

“Romulans?”

“No, the readings indicate that the weapons are of an unknown source. Indications are that the disruptors probably used some type of variable frequency modulation.”

Rob placed his hand on Jan’s knee. “I know that Paul had his problems concerning our marriage, but I’m sure that...”

Jan placed her forefinger on her husband’s mouth. “It’s okay, Rob. The truth is I still cared for him. I loved him once, but that was over three years before I met you.”

Rob nodded. “I know, Jan, but you did love him once, and this has to be hard on you.”

“Yes, just as the friends that you lost on that ship must be hard on you.” She took his hand and squeezed it gently.

The Stuarts quietly sat on the couch. Rob took his daughter in his arms and held her tight. Nothing more could be said as they each felt the painful loss and wondered who was responsible.

The End