

To Boldly Go: My Brother's Keeper

A Personal Log

By Cleve Johnson

Stardate 57468.3

Lieutenant Eric Kelly was enjoying talking with his friends and shipmates in one of the crew lounges aboard Starbase 82 while the U.S.S. *Providence* crew enjoyed some well-deserved R and R. On this particular evening, Eric was the guest of honor in celebration of his promotion.

Yoshi Nakamara, the security chief and tactical officer patted him on the back. "So, how does it feel to be a full lieutenant, Eric?"

"Doesn't feel any different, Yosh." Eric drank from his glass. "I expect all it means is that I get a few more credits in my account each month."

"On our small ship, yeah. That's all it means." Yoshi lifted his glass and said, "Here's to the second finest flyboy in Starfleet."

Eric frowned. "Second?"

Commander Blake Adams was walking toward the two younger officers. He had heard Yoshi's toast and Eric's response. "Yes, second," he said, smiling. "Because I'm the first."

Eric gave a half-bow to his CO. "I can't argue with that, Skipper."

Blake placed his hand on Eric's back. "Kid, I just want to say that your service to the ship has been outstanding, and your promotion is well deserved."

"Thank you, sir."

"You might not want to thank me when you find out all the extra responsibilities you're going to get."

Eric looked Blake in the eyes and smiled. "I look forward to whatever extra responsibilities that you give me, Skipper. I'm already looking forward to the next promotion."

Blake smiled back. "I like your enthusiasm, Kid. You remind me of...well, me."

"I've always looked up to you, sir." Eric's eye gleamed as he thought of a smart remark. "I have no choice since you're taller than I am."

Yoshi started to laugh until Blake shot him a stern look. But then, all three men burst out laughing. Yoshi wiped his brow, pretending that he was removing sweat (that wasn't there). "You had me going for a second, Skipper."

Blake offered a mischievous grin. "Just because I laugh doesn't mean I'm not serious, Mister Nakamara."

"Yes, sir." Yoshi began to look nervous and quickly excused himself, saying, "I think I needed to get back to the ship and check the targeting scanners.," as he rushed out of the lounge.

Blake looked at Eric. "I was just messing with him," Blake said. And both of them began to laugh again.



After the congratulations and good wishes ran out, Eric returned to his quarters on the *Providence*. He entered and started to remove his uniform when the high-pitched signal from the communication speaker interrupted him.

"Bridge to Lieutenant Kelly."

"Kelly. Go ahead."

"You have a private message from Earth."

"Please transfer it to my quarters."

The computer monitor lit up to reveal an image of Eric's mother. *"Son, your CO sent us a message to let us know about your promotion,"* she said. *"Your father and I are very proud of you."*

Eric sat in the chair at his desk and felt pleased that his parents had been informed, but he wondered why his father was not at home. Then again, his parents were both in Starfleet, and Ronald Kelly might have been teaching a class at the Academy when his mother recorded the message. He would probably get another message from his dad before too long.

"Your sister is doing well and sends her best. She made the dean's list and is at the top of her class. And Brian finished his tour at Utopia Planitia and is on his way to his first deep-space assignment. He will be serving on the Artemis. He said that he will be in the same sector as you."

Eric's mouth dropped as he wondered how his younger brother had gotten a posting on a top-of-the-line *Intrepid*-class starship. Brian was a good student at the Academy, but he wasn't the caliber that warranted such a position only a year after graduation. Eric remembered that his brother tended to be cocky and sometimes a little hot-headed as a kid, and he got in some scrapes, usually over a girl, that he could have walked away from; but Starfleet Academy had a reputation for bringing discipline to some of the most unlikely cadets. Eric hoped that his brother had learned and applied that discipline.

"...and I'm glad that you two will have some time together."

Eric realized that he had stopped listening to his mother's message as his mind had wandered. "Computer, replay the last fifteen seconds of the message."

"Brian should be arriving at Starbase 82 in a day or two to meet the Providence for transport to the Artemis, and I'm glad that you two will have some time together."

Eric hadn't seen his brother, except through an occasional subspace message, in almost two years. He looked forward to seeing Brian, but he was a little concerned that his brother might bring some discontent to Eric's routine. Brian, after all, tended to bring a little disruption to Eric's world the last few times that they got together.



Two days later, Eric received notice that the transport U.S.S. *Oslo* was in the process of docking; since he was not currently on duty, he left the *Providence* to meet his brother on the docking level. He saw his brother carrying a duffel strapped over his shoulder walking through the gantry, and he waved. “Brian!”

Brian Kelly waved back and quickened his pace. “Hey, bro!” He playfully slapped Eric’s offered hand away and embraced him. “Look at you, with two shiny gold pips on your collar. Congratulations.”

Eric smiled and nodded his head. “Thanks. How was your flight, Brian?”

“Boring.” Brian winked at his brother. “It would have been worse if I hadn’t got to know a good-looking fellow engineer that kept me company when she was off duty.”

Eric had almost forgotten that his brother had fancied himself a ladies’ man even before he started puberty. Of the two, Brian was the most popular and most outgoing. When they were younger, Eric was a little jealous of how well his brother seemed to be able to charm the girls, but Eric decided to not let that be a point of competition or dissent a long time ago. Unfortunately, Brian tended to brag about his encounters with females. “I hope that you don’t plan to get out of line with any of my shipmates while you’re on board.”

Brian took a step back as he pretended to be shocked and hurt by his older brother’s statement. “Me? Why would you think that I would do anything that was out of line?”

Eric just shook his head and said, “Don’t act like you don’t know what I’m talking about, brother.”

Brian laughed. “You’re still upset that I got to Lynn Miller before you did.”

“You knew that I was interested in her and planned to ask her to the school dance,” Eric said. “And she was a senior, just like me. You were a sophomore.”

“It’s not my fault that I’m the charming one.” Brian shot his brother a mischievous grin. “I can give you lessons if you want me to.”

Eric glared at his brother. “Not necessary.”

“Oh, you have someone. What’s her name?”

“Unlike you, I’m discreet about my relationships.” Eric felt the heat rise in his face.

“Calm down, bro. I’m just giving you a hard time.”

Eric forced a smile so that he would not give Brian any satisfaction in his teasing and changed the subject of the conversation. “You’re assigned to guest quarters on deck four. I’ll show you the way.”

“What? No time for some fun? I hear that this starbase has several eating establishments and a few bars.”

“If you want to look around and have some fun, Brian, that’s fine with me, but make sure that you are on the *Providence* by 0730 tomorrow.”

“You always were a little lacking in the fun department, but now you’re starting to sound like Mom and Dad,” Brian said.

“I’m not Mom or Dad, but someone needs to keep you out of trouble, so I guess that I’m just my brother’s keeper until you’re delivered to the *Artemis*,” Eric said, frowning. “Then you can do what you want.” Eric turned and started to turn, stopped, and turned back to face Brian. “The *Providence* leaves at 0810 and we won’t wait for you if you’re not on board.” He turned and starting walking back to where his ship was berthed.

Brian watched Eric walk away. “Jeez, give a guy a promotion, and he lets it go to his head,” he said to himself.



Eric was sitting at a table in *Providence*’s officer’s lounge talking with his friend and shipmate, Yoshi Nakamara. “Do you have any siblings, Yosh?”

“I have an older brother.”

“Any issues with him?”

“Not usually,” Yoshi said. “He thought that could boss me around when we were growing up, but we eventually came to an understanding.”

“How so?”

“When he was seventeen, and I was thirteen, our parents went away on a business trip for a few days. Nataki told me that it was my job to fix all the meals and clean up the dishes after each meal. I told him that it wasn’t fair that I fix the meals and do the cleanup, and that we should share the responsibility. He didn’t like it.”

“How did you resolve it?”

“One night, after dinner, I left all the dishes on the table and went to my room to work on homework. He stormed into my room and yelled at me for not cleaning up the kitchen. I told him, no, and he grabbed me.” Yoshi shrugged and smiled. “After that, he agreed that we should share the responsibility.”

Eric cocked his head to one side as he wrinkled his nose and eyebrows. “It seems like you’re leaving something out.”

“Oh, yes. I suppose I did.” Yoshi continued as his eyes brightened. “Even at a young age, I was always better at martial arts than Nataki. Bossing me was his first mistake. Grabbing me was his second. A simple jujitsu wrist lock kept him in my power until he agreed to my terms.”

Eric shook his head. “I might need you to teach me that wrist lock.”

Yoshi smiled. “Your brother can’t be as bad as you described.”

“You haven’t met him.” Eric gulped his synthale. “He’s a good guy, and I love him. I just wish that he would take the volume of his personality down a few notches.”

Just then, Brian Kelly entered the lounge and saw Eric and Yoshi sitting at one of the tables and talking. He headed straight for them and sat down at one of the other two empty chairs. “Hey Eric, I made it on board, so you don’t have to send security after me.” He chuckled. “And I’m ten hours ahead of your deadline.”

Eric gave a slight grin. “Glad to hear it, Brian.” He nodded his head toward Yoshi. “This is Lieutenant Yoshi Nakamara. *He’s* the head of security and the ship’s tactical officer.”

Brian offered his hand to Yoshi, and they grasped each other’s hand firmly. Brian squeezed tightly, but Yoshi, unexpectedly, mirrored Brian’s attempted display of strength. “Glad to meet you, Lieutenant.”

“And you, Ensign,” Yoshi replied.

“I’m in civies. How did you know my rank?” Brian turned to look at his brother with sudden understanding. “My brother has been telling you about me, huh?”

Yoshi smiled. “A little.”

“Well, don’t let his view of me cloud your judgment.”

“I never do that,” Yoshi said. “I keep an open mind about people and observe before making any judgments.”

“Then I should have a chance.” Brian leaned over and whispered to Yoshi. “Eric thinks I’m a little too wild just because I like to have some fun. And he’s jealous because women are more attracted to me than to him.”

Eric rolled his eyes. “I’m not jealous, Brian. But I *do* think you’re too wild sometimes.” He turned to look at Yoshi. “Can you just throw him in the brig until we rendezvous with the *Artemis*?”

Yoshi started to laugh. “Sorry, Eric. He would have to actually get into serious trouble before I could do that.”

“That’s what I thought you would say,” Eric replied.

“I thought we were going to spend some quality time on this trip, bro.”

Eric looked at his brother. “I want to. I just want you to show some...some restraint. For a change.”

Brian nodded. “Okay, Eric. I’ll try.”

“Thank you, and I apologize for starting us off on the wrong foot.”

“Apology accepted, bro.” Brian, out of the corner of his eye saw the double doors slide open, and he turned his head to see a young woman enter. He noticed that she looked in his direction, smiled, and waved before she took a seat at the bar. Turning to Eric and Yoshi, Brian

asked, “Who is that pretty little thing in the blue uniform? Did you see the way she smiled at me?”

Eric cleared his throat and tapped the tabletop to get his brother’s attention. “That is Lieutenant Gonzalez, our geologist and head of planetary sciences. And for the record, she was smiling at me.”

“Really? So, you *do* have someone special on this ship.” Brian’s eyes got a gleam in them just as they always did when he was about to turn on his charm. “Why don’t you introduce me, bro?”

Eric’s body tightened up as he began to feel the heat rise from his neck to his face. “Because it would be just like Lynn Miller all over again. Not this time, Brian. Not this time.”

Brian smiled. “Okay, Eric. Not this time.”

Yoshi looked between the two brothers. “If this turns into a fight over a woman, it *will* be the brig for both of you.”

Eric took another swig of his ale. “It won’t come to that, Yosh. This is going to be an uneventful trip, right, Brian?”

Brian nodded as he smiled at his brother. “Aye, aye, sir.”

Eric could not help but return his brother’s jocular demeanor. He did introduce Brian to Maria Gonzalez with the express provision that Brian would not try to come on to her, and the brothers spent the rest of the evening in Eric’s quarters catching up with what had happened in each other’s lives during the last couple of years and sharing memories. By the time Brian had left Eric to go to the guest quarters assigned to him, Eric felt assured that his brother would settle down, at least some of the time, and start applying the discipline that Starfleet Academy had worked to instill in him. At least some of the time.

The End