

To Boldly Go:

The *Starquest* Adventures

The Survivor

by Cleve Johnson

The U.S.S. *Starquest* cruised through the void of space.

Rob Stuart, captain of this new vessel, had spent several weeks familiarizing himself with his new command. It was a *Nova*-class starship with several of the latest scientific technology upgrades that Starfleet had to offer. And Lieutenant Commander Blake Adams and the new chief engineer Lieutenant Commander Jeron Lexra had upgraded the ship further with a holographic backup bridge crew and a holographic security force. Since *Starquest* was a small science vessel with a small crew currently operating in mostly unknown regions of the Beta Quadrant, the extra ‘people’ would be an asset in situations that might require them.

Stuart rose from the command chair that occupied the center of the bridge and moved toward the CONN station where Blake Adams skillfully piloted the small, but mighty vessel. “What’s our ETA to the Theta Omicron system?” Stuart asked his long-time friend.

“Three hours at present speed, Skipper,” Adams replied nonchalantly. “Would you like me to shorten that?”

Stuart smiled as he turned and walked away. “Three hours will be sufficient, Blake.” He made his way to the port side door, which led to the rest of deck one. “You have the bridge. I’ll be in my ready room.”



How long had it been? The old man sat on the edge of the bunk contemplating the past years. He had lost account of the passage of time since he had been stranded, adrift in space.

He was getting weaker each day. For more years than he could remember he had kept the medical and life support systems working at peak efficiency, although the propulsion systems, except for maneuvering thrusters, had been inoperable for what seemed to have been an eternity. He had kept communications operating, constantly transmitting a distress call, but no one had heard. No one had responded. And with the death of his wife last month, the man had lost hope of ever seeing another living person again.



A few hours had passed, and the captain had returned to the bridge after the signal had been detected. He had called the first officer to join him.

Commander Leeson, responding to the captain's summons, entered the bridge and moved quickly to her station at the captain's right. "What have I missed?" Leeson inquired as she sat beside her CO.

Stuart turned his head toward his first officer. "It seems that we are not the first Federation ship to venture this far into the Beta Quadrant," he stated.

Leeson stared at Stuart, awed by his statement. "I'm not aware of any other starship that has explored this part of the galaxy, sir," she replied.

"According to our records," Stuart began, "there hasn't been."

"Excuse me, Captain," the Vulcan science officer interrupted. "I have identified the signal as coming from the U.S.S. *Kennedy*, registry NCC-1963."

"Thank you, Commander," Stuart replied. "Computer, what information do you have on the starship *Kennedy*, NCC-1963?"

"The U.S.S. Kennedy is a Constitution II-class starship under the command of Captain George Hanson. It was reported lost on Stardate 12648.6 while en route to Earth from Andor," the computer stated. *"The Kennedy was named after a 20th Century president of the United States of Amer..."*

"Thank you, Computer," Stuart said. "Blake, have you locked onto the coordinates of the *Kennedy*'s transmission?"

Blake Adams punched information into his console and nodded. "Course locked in, Skipper."

"Engage at maximum warp."

Melanie Leeson leaned toward her captain. "Do you think there could still be survivors after almost sixty-four years?" she whispered.

"That's what we're going to find out," Stuart replied. "Make use of the terminal in my ready room and find out as much as you can on the *Kennedy*, Exec. You have about two hours before we arrive."

"Aye, Captain," Leeson said as she rose from her station and moved toward the door.



Melanie Leeson had been studying the records of the starship *Kennedy* for the past hour and a half. She discovered that it was the last *Constitution II* to be constructed, not a refit, and the last to be in service at the time of its reported disappearance. What bothered the first officer was the lack of information about its final mission.

Rob Stuart entered his ready room, approaching the desk where Leeson sat. She started to rise from her seat, but Stuart raised his hand, signaling her to remain seated. The captain sat across from his first officer, in the chair that she normally would be in

during one of their private meetings.

“Any progress, Exec?” Stuart inquired.

Leeson leaned back in the captain’s chair. “There isn’t much to go on, Captain” she stated. “It appears that the ship was docked at Starbase Four. The captain had granted shore leave for the crew.”

Leeson looked back to the computer terminal to scan more information. “The ship departed on Stardate 12645.4 with less than a third of her crew with orders to travel to Andor.”

“Andor,” Stuart repeated. “For what purpose?”

Leeson continued. “There was some kind of medical emergency that involved an Andorian ambassador and some of his staff,” she said. *Kennedy* was the closest starship to Andor. Starfleet wanted the ambassador and his staff transported to Starfleet Medical on Earth immediately.”

Stuart wondered why Starfleet seemed so pressed to get a group of Andorians to Earth that the captain did not take time to recall the entire crew. “Does the record show why they only had a skeleton crew?”

“No,” Leeson said, shaking her head. “Perhaps the medical emergency was so great that speed was more important.”

“Did the ship disappear before or after it reached Andor?” Stuart asked.

“After,” Leeson stated. Andorian Space Central reported that the *Kennedy* entered orbit and had left, presumably toward Earth, within an hour of its arrival.” The first officer paused as her commanding officer contemplated the information that she had shared. “Captain Hanson’s last transmission to Starfleet Command indicated that they had encountered some type of spatial anomaly in Sector 018.”

“There are no anomalies within a hundred light years of that sector,” Stuart exclaimed.

“It could have been a wormhole,” Leeson stated in her most professional tone. “There’s only one that is known to be stable at both ends.”

“In Bajoran space.”

Leeson nodded.

“Anything else?” Stuart asked.

“Starfleet sent three starships to search Sector 018 for any sign of the ship or spatial anomalies,” Leeson said. “But the search was called off after two weeks and the ship was officially listed as missing.”

Stuart contemplated the situation. “And now we may have found it after more

than sixty years.”

“It appears so, sir.” The first officer paused. “I assume that you will want to send an away team, Captain.”

Stuart rose from his chair and pulled down his uniform jacket. “Certainly Exec,” he said. “Put your team together and brief them. I’ll be on the bridge.”

Stuart turned and exited his ready room as Leeson called the members of the crew that would join her for the away mission.



The old man stood in Sickbay hovering over the chambers that encased those that he had been entrusted to protect. He knew that he had a duty to these people, but that didn’t seem to matter anymore. For more than sixty years he had maintained power to keep the stasis chambers working. Since the death of his wife, the man lost his desire to fulfill his duty. He had lost his ability to care about these people in stasis. He thought about just deactivating the chambers and letting them out to die slowly of the disease that they carried within them. But that would give his nemesis, the one who poisoned these innocents, victory. No, he decided that he would leave the stasis chambers functioning and hope that eventually *Kennedy* would be found.

The man left Sickbay and walked the curved corridor to the nearest turbolift. He punched in his destination on the control panel and was on his way to the only place that seemed to bring any comfort to his lonely existence.



The *Starquest* had just entered normal space when Commander Leeson entered the bridge. She saw a speck in the middle of the main viewer that appeared to be the general shape of a *Constitution*-class starship.

“Magnify to factor four,” Stuart said.

“She looks in pretty good shape for her age,” Blake Adams said from the flight control console.

Stuart stood and walked down the steps to the lower level next to the CONN. Leeson joined him, placing her hand on Blake’s shoulder. “I’ve never seen a ship of this class before,” Leeson muttered, “except in pictures.”

Stuart smiled. “There’s one in the fleet museum,” he stated. “Although, that one is an original configuration of the *Constitution*-class.”

Leeson studied the image on the screen. She loved away missions but looked forward to this one after seeing the obsolete starship on the screen.

“Full sensor sweeps, Commander,” Stuart said as he turned to return to the center seat.

“Scanning, Captain,” came T’Les’ voice.

“Blake,” the captain said, “take us within 2 kilometers.”

“Aye, Skipper.”

No one spoke. The entire bridge crew focused their attention on the viewer—all except for T’Les who finally broke the silence.

“The warp core is operating at minimal energy levels, but both warp and impulse drives are inoperative,” the Vulcan science officer stated. “All power, including life support, has been terminated except decks five, six, seven, Main Engineering, and the botanical garden located in the secondary hull.”

“Energy conservation,” Adams stated.

“I have also identified the presence of one human male on board and five additional faint life readings in Sickbay,” T’Les added.

Stuart thought for a moment. “Could some of them be in stasis?”

“A distinct possibility,” T’Les responded.

“Time to find out,” Stuart said, nodding to his first officer.

Leeson walked toward the turbolift. “Yoshi.”

The security chief left his station and joined Leeson.

Leeson tapped her combadge. “Doctor Edwards, Lieutenant Commander Lexra, please report to Transporter Room One,” she ordered just as the turbolift doors closed.

“Establish a link with their computer and download all information that she’s accumulated over the years, Commander,” Stuart said to the science officer.

“Aye Captain,” T’Les replied.



Chief Petty Officer John McKinney checked the pattern buffers and returned to the console. He noticed the order from Commander Leeson indicating that an away team would be beaming to a derelict starship that had been missing for sixty-three years. McKinney also noticed the name of the starship and remembered the family history that his mother had shared with him as a boy.

The doors slid open, interrupting “Mac’s” thoughts, and Doctor Edwards walked in. “Am I the first to arrive?” she asked.

“Come into my humble abode, Doctor,” McKinney invited. “Since the others aren’t here yet, can I ask how my physical turned out?”

“You have the health of a forty-year-old, Chief,” the doctor said stone-faced.

“I *am* a forty-year-old,” McKinney smirked.

“Then you’re right where you should be.” Edwards smiled as she said it.

McKinney shot the doctor a look, shaking his head, just as Leeson, Nakamara, and Lexra entered the transporter room. “Set phasers on stun,” Leeson said as she, followed by the others, stepped onto the transport platform. “Chief, how close can you get us to sickbay?”

McKinney set the coordinates. “Right outside the door, Commander,” he said.

“Energi...,” Leeson started to say.

“Commander,” McKinney interrupted. “I would like to make a personal request.”

Leeson cocked her head and raised her eyebrow in a very Vulcan-like expression but said nothing.

“I would like to join the away team,” McKinney continued.

“For what purpose?” Leeson wondered why Mac had made the request. He had never seemed interested in away missions before.

McKinney stepped from behind the console. “My grandfather was a security officer on the *Kennedy*,” he stated. “My mother lost him when she was only seven.”

Leeson thought for a moment. If her grandfather or a relative had been lost as the chief’s had, she would also want to be included. “Do you think you can keep your mind on the mission?”

“I’ll do my best, Commander,” McKinney replied.

Leeson nodded. “Okay, get a phaser and tricorder,” she said.

Mac bent down behind the console and retrieved not only a phaser and tricorder but an emergency repair kit as well. He stepped up to the platform with the others, turned, and faced the first officer, who was impressed that he had already been prepared to go.

“Computer,” Mac said. “Activate holographic transporter technician.”

A female hologram appeared and said, “Please state the nature in which I can serve you.”

“We want to beam over to the starship *Kennedy*, Gina,” Mac said. “Coordinates are laid in,” he added.

Leeson looked at Chief McKinney with a puzzled expression. “Energize,” she said. And the away team suddenly found themselves in a corridor outside of the sickbay of a *Constitution II*-class starship.

“Gina?” Leeson asked.

Mac shrugged. “I gave her a name,” he said. “Holographic transporter technician seemed a little too impersonal.”

“Why Gina?”

“She reminds me of someone I once knew.”

“Uh-huh.” Leeson looked at McKinney suspiciously. “Old girlfriend?”

“Not exactly, but she was my first crush.” McKinney half smiled; he half frowned. “We were in sixth grade, and she wouldn’t give me the time of day.”

“I don’t want to interrupt, but I’m picking up definite life signs in here,” Edwards said, scanning the door that led to the medical facility. “The readings indicate one humanoid and four Andorians, all in stasis.”

“Let’s have a look.” Leeson led the way toward the door that immediately parted before her.



The old man had fallen asleep on the bench in the botanical garden. He had spent much of his time in this place, talking with the woman he had recently buried. But he began to wake as if coming out of a daze, realizing that his communicator was beeping. It was the intruder alert signal that he had programmed years earlier to indicate help had arrived. Help or maybe something not so helpful.

The man rose from the bench and stared at the mound of dirt a few feet away. “We’ve got company, Maureen.” He looked at the gravestone. “I better see if they are friend or foe,” the man added as he turned.

The man noticed an object outside the huge transparent aluminum windows. He walked toward the windows and studied the design of the ship that had come alongside the *Kennedy*. He could not see any specific markings from this distance but noticed the saucer shape and dual warp nacelles of the vessel. He had never seen a ship like the one he stared at, but it appeared to have the familiar design of a Federation starship, only smaller than most of the ones he was familiar with. He was not surprised since he had been away from everything familiar to him for a very long time. Did the hopelessness and loneliness finally drive him crazy? Or was he witnessing the miracle of finally being rescued after all this time.

He pulled himself away from the windows and walked briskly to the nearest turbolift.



Yoshi Nakamara bent over one of the stasis chambers, looking at the Andorian within. “This one looks familiar,” he stated. “I think this might be the ambassador who

participated in the Babel Conference over a hundred years ago.”

“How would you know that, Lieutenant?” Mac asked.

“History course from the Academy,” Yoshi replied nonchalantly. “I always liked history.”

“What are those purple splotches on their faces and hands, Jan?” Leeson asked the CMO, who had been checking the medical database.

“The Andorians have been exposed to *Thelioptus Shakrila*,” the doctor stated without taking her eyes from the readout on the terminal where she was working.

“In English, Doctor,” Mac requested.

Edwards smiled. “That’s the Andorian medical name for it,” she said. “It means *purple death*.”

“Are we in danger of getting it?” Yoshi inquired.

“Humans are immune to it,” Edwards said as she left the monitor and walked toward the stasis chamber that contained the human. “And that being the case, I wonder why this man is in here.”

“Because that’s where we imprisoned him.”

Each member of the away team, startled, quickly focused their attention on the man who had entered through the sickbay entrance. Leeson and Nakamara had their phasers drawn at the sound of the old man’s voice.

“Who are *you*?” Leeson asked.

The man recognized a variation of the Starfleet emblem on each of the strangers’ uniforms. As for the uniforms, Starfleet probably had made many changes in sixty years. He could only assume that the “things” being pointed toward him by two of the strangers were modern phasers.

“We don’t want to hurt you,” the woman said. “Please tell us who you are.”

The old man had noticed that the woman and the young Asian man lowered their weapons. He slowly took a few steps forward. “Forgive me for surprising you,” he said. “But you have given me quite a surprise yourselves.”

“We tried to hail the ship, but no one responded,” Leeson said. “I’m Commander Melanie Leeson of the Federation Starship *Starquest*,” she stated as she extended her hand toward the elderly man.

He took it and fell to his knees, squeezing her hand, not willing to let go. Edwards, thinking the man was having a seizure, ran to his aid.

Waiving her off, the man looked up, tears running down his cheeks. “I’m

alright,” he said. “Just didn’t think I would see another living person again.”

He struggled to get up. With the help of Leeson and Edwards, he found his footing and smiled slightly. Edwards knew that it was a forced smile and placed her hand on his shoulder to bring comfort.

“I am Lieutenant Raymond Reynolds,” the man finally said. “I’m the last remaining crew member of the *Kennedy*.”

“Can you tell us what happened?” Leeson inquired.

Edwards stepped forward. “I think we should get him to our Sickbay first,” she interrupted.

“No!” It was Reynolds who objected. “I can’t leave Maureen.”

“Who’s Maureen?” Edwards gently asked.

“She’s my wife,” he said sadly. “She *was* my wife,” he added. “I can’t leave her.”

McKinney stepped forward, not wanting to interrupt the man’s grief, yet he needed to know about his grandfather. “Sir?”

Reynolds, still crying, wiped his eyes and looked at the younger man.

“I’m so sorry about what happened to you,” Mac said sympathetically. “At a later time, I would like to ask you a personal question.” Then McKinney stepped back and exited the room.

Lexra watched as the transporter chief left the room and turned toward Leeson. “I would like to inspect the engineering section, Commander,” he stated. “I could take Chief McKinney with me to keep him busy.”

Leeson nodded her approval and the Trill engineer left to find out where McKinney had gone.

Reynolds thought that the chief petty officer looked familiar. “The man who wants to talk to me, what is his name?”

“That’s Chief John McKinney,” Leeson replied.

“The name isn’t familiar, but I think that I should know him,” Reynolds mumbled. “I know that’s impossible though.”

Leeson gently placed her hand on the man’s arm. “His grandfather was a member of your crew,” she said. “He wants to find out what happened to him.”

“Do you know his grandfather’s name?”

“No, I’m sorry,” Leeson replied. “He can wait until you’re ready to talk.”

“I’m ready now, Commander,” Reynolds stated somewhat forcefully.

Edwards pulled out her medical tricorder and scanned the *Kennedy* officer. “You seem fairly healthy,” the CMO said, “but I think you need to add protein to your diet.”

Reynolds smiled wryly. “Wouldn’t happen to have a juicy steak on your ship, would you?”

“I think that I could prescribe that if you agree to come to my sickbay,” Edwards said temptingly. “I promise that nothing will happen to Maureen,” she added when Reynolds’ countenance began to lower at the thought of leaving his wife.

“I agree,” Reynolds said after slight hesitation.

Leeson moved forward. “First, please tell me about this man in the stasis chamber.”

Reynolds walked toward the canister and stared at the sleeping human. “The captain decided that this would be the most secure prison for him,” he stated. “This man is a spy.” Reynolds looked toward Leeson. “He tried killing Ambassador Sras and his aids by deliberately infecting them with some Andorian disease,” he said angrily.

“Do you know why he would do such a thing?” Edwards asked.

Reynolds thought for a moment before answering. “I have no idea why,” he said, “but I do know that he is part of a subversive organization that *claims* to look out for the best interests of the Federation.”

“Fortunately, a cure was discovered for *Purple Death* over 40 years ago,” Edwards stated. She turned to Leeson. “I’ll arrange for the stasis chambers to be beamed to our sickbay after I complete a physical on Lieutenant Reynolds,” the doctor said.

“Good idea, Jan,” Leeson replied. “Yoshi and I will make a quick survey of the ship before we beam back.”

“Are you ready, Lieutenant?” Edwards asked Reynolds.

“It’s been a long time since I have used a transporter,” he said. “I don’t remember how it feels.”

“You won’t feel a thing,” Edwards said. She tapped her communicator pin. “Edwards to *Starquest*. Two to beam directly to Sickbay.”

Moments later Edwards and Reynolds were engulfed in the beam of energy that transported them away.



Lexra and McKinney searched the antique engine room. The chief engineer was impressed by the design, although it did not compare with the more advanced modern

starships. McKinney, although an engineer and transporter technician, did not seem too interested in exploring this nostalgic ship with all of its historic artifacts.

“You seem distracted, Chief,” Lexra said, trying to offer assistance.

McKinney smiled, trying unsuccessfully to hide his personal feelings. “I’m sorry Mister Lexra,” he replied. “I know that I should be excited about being aboard a ship of this class, but I’m more interested in talking to the old man.”

“I am sure that you will find the answers that you seek, Chief,” Lexra said.



Rob Stuart and Blake Adams walked through the corridor. Blake slowed and pulled at Stuart’s arm to get his attention.

“How are things going with Jan?”

“They seem to be going okay.”

“Just okay?” Blake glanced at his friend; his eye twinkled as he smiled.

Rob stopped and turned to face Blake. “There’s no need for matchmaking.”

“Of course, not, Skipper,” Blake said. “I’d only need to do that if you two weren’t spending so much time together.”

“We’re not spending *that* much time together, Blake.”

Blake’s smile grew larger. “You’ve had dinner with her every night for the last two weeks followed by time in the holodeck for three of those evenings.”

Rob shook his head and resumed walking. “We didn’t have dinner together last night.”

Blake almost laughed as he continued to walk beside Rob. “That’s right. You had breakfast with her yesterday.”

Rob raised his eyebrows and cocked his head slightly to one side. “Well, I guess that we have been spending a lot of time together lately.”

“It’s good to see you like this, Rob.” Blake placed his hand on Rob’s shoulder as they continued walking.

“Like what?”

“Happy.”

“I usually am happy, Blake.”

“Not happy like this, you’re not,” Blake said. “You’re showing your happiness.”

“Oh, maybe I need to pay more attention to how I’m coming across to people.”

“Yeah, you don’t want to look like you’re too human in front of the crew.” Blake smiled. “Seriously, Rob, it’s good to see you finding someone to love.”

Rob immediately stopped and faced his friend. “Woah, who said anything about...”

Blake stopped, too, since Rob had grabbed his upper arm and pulled him around. “There are different ways of saying things, Skipper—words, facial expressions, body language, actions, and probably a few more. Just because you haven’t said as much in words, all those other ways have been talking, and they say that you are in love with the doctor.” Blake paused to let what he had said sink in, and then he shot Rob a wide smile. “Enjoy your dinner with the doc, Skipper.” He turned around and walked in the direction from where he came.

Rob Stuart stood and watched his friend walk away, wondering if what Blake had said was true. He knew that his feelings for the doctor were growing, but was he in love with her?



“You’ll be happy to know,” Doctor Edwards said, “that I am giving you a clean bill of health.”

Lieutenant Ray Reynolds began to sit up on the examination table. “Maureen took good care of me,” he said. “She was the head nurse on my ship.”

Edwards placed her hand on the elderly man’s shoulder. “You must miss her very much,” she said sympathetically. “I wish we could have arrived sooner.”

Reynolds feigned a weak smile.

Before Reynolds or Edwards could continue their conversation the door to Sickbay slid open, revealing Rob Stuart. As the captain strode across the room Edwards motioned toward him. “Lieutenant Raymond Reynolds, this is Captain Robert P. Stuart.”

“A pleasure,” Stuart stated as he offered his hand.

“Likewise,” Reynolds replied, shaking Stuart’s outstretched hand. “I can’t tell you how surprised and happy I am to be with people again.”

“We are at your disposal, Mister Reynolds.” Stuart turned toward Edwards. “Is he up for a short debriefing?” Stuart asked.

“I think so, Captain,” she said. “But I promised him a juicy steak dinner in the officer’s lounge. Can it wait until later?”

“Of course,” Stuart replied. “I want to have a chance to study the information that we’re downloading first.”

Reynolds stepped down from his seated position on the table. "I'll be glad to tell you anything that you want to know, Captain."

"I appreciate that Mister Reynolds," Stuart replied. "I'll arrange guest quarters for you while you're having lunch with the doctor."

"Thank you, sir," Reynolds said.

"Doctor Edwards, could I meet with you later?" Stuart asked.

Edwards tried not to let her professional demeanor lapse, secretly hoping that Stuart wanted to discuss something of a more personal matter. "I should be free at 1800 hours, Captain," she replied.

"I'll be in your office at 1800 then," Stuart stated as a matter of fact before he turned to leave the sickbay.



Commander Melanie Leeson strode toward the turbolift. The lift doors parted, revealing Lexra, McKinney, and Nakamara. "I was just on my way to join you," Leeson stated. "Report."

"The warp core is operating at fifteen percent power," Salesh offered. "The fuel reserves are almost depleted and the dilithium crystals show indications that they may soon fail," he added.

"Commander," Nakamara said. "There are eight graves in the botanical garden. I assume that one of them belongs to his wife, but none of them are marked."

"We'll find out from Lieutenant Reynolds who else is buried there," Leeson stated. "But the question of what happened to the rest of the crew remains."

"All the shuttles are missing," Nakamara added. "They must have abandoned ship."

Leeson nodded. "Let's get back to *Starquest* and see if our guest can clue us in," she said.



Rob Stuart studied *Kennedy's* log entries. Lieutenant Reynolds kept making entries until a few weeks ago when his wife had died, but it was the older entries made by the ship's captain that interested Stuart most.

The door chime broke Stuart's concentration. "Come," he said.

The door parted, revealing Melanie Leeson. "Sorry to bother you, Captain," she said.

Stuart motioned for her to come in. "Not at all," he said. "How was it?"

Leeson almost misunderstood the captain's question but realized that he wanted her response to being on a ship of a past era. "I must admit that I felt awed by the technological advances we've made since that ship was built," she said.

"You're not much of a historian are you, Exec?" Stuart asked with a smirk.

Leeson thought about that. "Not really, Captain."

Stuart pulled out a chair for his first officer, implying that she should sit. Stuart sat down in a chair that faced hers. "I've been studying the *Kennedy's* logs," he stated. "It appears that your theory that a wormhole was responsible for their disappearance is correct." Stuart paused to see if Leeson wanted to add anything. When she didn't, he continued. "They never knew what part of the galaxy they were in, but warp drive was inoperable, so they scanned for any nearby star systems with M-class worlds."

"Did they find any?" Leeson inquired.

Stuart nodded. "The wormhole deposited the ship within the boundaries of such a star system," he said. "Two planets were class M," he said. "The fourth planet showed sub-tropical climate with an oxygen content slightly higher than Earth's with slightly lower gravity."

Leeson shifted in her seat. "Were some of the crew members left there?"

"A landing party, led by the first officer, encountered a pack of large carnivorous reptiles," he said. "Only one crewman made it back to the ship. And she died a few hours later."

Leeson thought of all the dangerous situations that she had encountered during her career. The possibility of being eaten by a dinosaur-like creature was not something that she would like to face.

"After their loss, the captain ordered the ship to the fifth planet, which showed a cooler temperature and similar gravity to Earth," Stuart continued. "They found a humanoid civilization similar to Earth's early 20th century."

"They didn't try to contact the inhabitants, did they?" Leeson asked, concerned that the Prime Directive might have been violated.

Stuart shook his head negatively. "No," he said. "But Captain Hanson decided to stay in orbit a few months to study the civilization while the ship underwent repairs."

Leeson shook her head, wondering how a crew stranded in an unknown sector of space could resist the temptation to settle on a primitive habited planet. "It must have been hard for them to stay on the ship with that planet so close."

"Hanson suspected that some of his crew wanted to jump ship and mingle with the population," Stuart said. "So, he decided to leave orbit and set out for the next nearest star system."

“Without warp drive?” Leeson asked incredulously. “That would have taken years!”

“Hanson didn’t want to risk his people interfering with the natives,” Stuart stated. “He even admitted that he was tempted to authorize abandoning ship at that point.”

Leeson got up and looked out the window, staring at the elder starship that seemed to hang in space. “All the shuttles are missing,” she said. “Perhaps the crew went back there,” she said.

“The captain thought so,” Stuart said. “One of his last log entries stated that most of the crew wanted to leave the ship and return there. Hanson was afraid of a mutiny, so he let anyone go who wanted to.”

Leeson closed her eyes, shocked that a Starfleet crew would consider mutiny. Of course, the captain’s fears may have been unfounded.

“Maybe not. Here,” Stuart said, handing his first officer a PADD. “Read this.”

Melanie Leeson took the device from her CO and scanned through the log entry of the *Kennedy*’s commander. According to the log, only nine people stayed with the captain to care for the Andorian Ambassador and his staff. Only nine had remained loyal to protect the Prime Directive. Only nine tried to reach another star system.

Stuart reached for the PADD after his first officer finished reading. “If in a similar situation,” he said, “I hope that my crew will act better than his.”

“Any who don’t will answer to me,” Leeson commented.



Janice Edwards had escorted Lieutenant Reynolds to the guest quarters assigned to him. He thanked her for an enjoyable dinner and excused himself for the evening. Edwards started to go toward the captain’s quarters but decided to head for the turbolift instead. He would be coming to see her at 1800 hours in sickbay anyway. She did not want to seem too eager to see him; however, she *was* eager to see him.



Chief John McKinney tried to concentrate on recalibrating the targeting sensor controls, but his mind kept desiring to talk with the old man from the *Kennedy*. He tried to stay focused to no avail. “I might as well get it over with,” he said to himself as he closed the panel and rose to his feet.

As McKinney strode toward the door that led out of the transporter room his combadge chirped. He tapped it, not breaking stride. “McKinney here,” he said.

“*Sorry to bother you,*” the voice of Lieutenant Reynolds said, “*but I know that you wanted to talk with me.*”

“McKinney smiled, thinking that his timing was perfect. “I sure do, sir.”

“*I’m in guest quarters on Deck One if you are available now,*” Reynolds said.

“On my way, sir,” McKinney said as the doors parted for him.



Stuart wandered the corridors of Deck Three. He wrestled with his feelings about Janice Edwards as he approached Sickbay. After Blake had confronted him about how much time Stuart had been spending with the doctor, it caused him to think about how close he was getting to Edwards. Was it time to take the relationship to the next step? He wondered if he should take a step back to evaluate the relationship or if he should move ahead. Stuart and Edwards had previously talked about not moving too fast, but the last couple of weeks seemed like they had jumped from sub-light to warp speed.

Stuart stopped in front of the entrance to Edwards’ office, pausing before entering. *Here goes nothing,* he thought as the door parted and he entered the room.

“Punctuality must be your middle name, Captain,” Edwards said, noting that the chronometer on the computer monitor had just switched to indicate 1800 hours.

“Actually, Doctor,” Stuart began, “my middle name is Patrick.”

Edwards, smiling, invited the captain to sit in the chair across the desk from hers. “Would you like something to drink?” she asked. “Tea?”

Stuart held up a hand, declining the offer. “No thank you,” he replied. “Before dinner, I wanted to talk with you about something, but I don’t want to...I don’t want to seem like I’m trying to move our relationship forward too fast.”

“I appreciate that, Rob, and I know that you tend to keep your emotions in check,” she responded. “Maybe you should throw caution to the wind and let me know how you feel.” Jan, like Rob, did not want the relationship to move too fast, but she knew that the two of them had grown close, and she wanted to grow closer. She wanted Rob to be open with her.

Stuart took a deep breath. “I know that we have been seeing each other frequently. Almost every night.” A slight laugh slipped out of his mouth. “I want you to know that even though I tried to not move too quickly, as we had agreed, it just seemed...natural to move forward.”

“It felt natural to me, too.” Janice reached across the desk, inviting Rob to take her hand, which he did. “I don’t think that we’ve moved too fast, Rob.”

Stuart smiled at the doctor. What she had said gave him the confidence to open up to her. “I have had feelings for you for a long time,” Stuart said, “but two things kept me from acting on them sooner than I did.”

Edwards waited for Stuart to say more but when he didn't, she prompted him. "What kept you quiet?"

Stuart got up and paced the floor. He stopped in front of a portrait of a ballet dancer on the wall, his back facing the doctor. "I was afraid that I would not be able to...be objective as your CO while in a relationship with you. *And* I was concerned about the crew's possible reaction."

Edwards rose from her seat and walked to Stuart, standing behind him, placing her hand on his shoulder. "This crew is like family, Rob, and no one who has seen us together seems to have a problem, do they?"

"No, I don't think so." Stuart turned to face Edwards. "Do you remember when I told you that I had lost someone close to me?"

Jan nodded her head. "I remember."

"What I didn't tell you was that we were going to be married."

Jan had suspected that was the case but did not feel that it was right to bring up the subject. She knew that Rob would eventually tell her...when he was ready. It seemed that now he was ready. "Do you feel like you would be betraying her?" She was not jealous of a memory, but she wanted to be sensitive.

Stuart shook his head, wiping a tear that rolled down his right cheek. "No. She would want me to love again... and be happy." He paused. "If anything, I'm afraid of loving you and losing you on an away mission or in a battle with some hostile aliens that we might encounter."

Edwards looked Stuart in the eyes, trying to read the depth of his soul. "Risk is a part of wearing this uniform, Rob," she stated firmly. "I'm willing to risk anything to love you."

Stuart was stunned. He knew that his feelings for Janice Edwards had been adrift just like that derelict ship that floated alongside the *Starquest*, but now, Stuart had gained clarity and could allow himself to love her without fear of losing her, without showing favoritism. He took the doctor in her arms and kissed her.



Lieutenant Reynolds greeted Chief McKinney as he entered the guest quarters. "Come in Chief McKinney," he said warmly. "I understand that you have a question that you wanted to ask me."

McKinney stepped through the open doorway, allowing the hatch to slide shut. "Yes sir," he replied. "I wanted to know if you knew my grandfather."

"He was a member of the *Kennedy* crew?" Reynolds inquired, already knowing the answer.

“Yes sir.” McKinney was beginning to feel anxious about learning of the fate of his mother’s father. “His name is...was...I’m not sure I want to know if he could still be alive,” the transporter chief finally muttered. “I don’t know what I’d think about him if I found out that he was one of the crew that abandoned ship.”

Reynolds pointed to the chairs near the viewports. “Let’s sit down,” he said. “Tell me his name and I’ll see if I can help you find your answers.”

McKinney sat in the nearest chair, following the old man’s lead. “Lieutenant Donald Sims,” McKinney stated. “I think he was with ship’s security,” he added.

Ray Reynolds looked sad, a teardrop forming in his right eye. “I knew Don well,” he said. “He was my best friend.”

McKinney noticed the sadness that radiated from Reynolds and wondered if the old man’s sadness meant that his grandfather was dead or had betrayed the ship. “He’s dead, isn’t he?” McKinney hoped that was the case because it would have been more painful if the alternative was true.

Reynolds just sat motionless, staring out the viewport. “He died two years ago,” he stated sadly. “I buried him in the botanical gardens next to Captain Hanson.”

McKinney began to weep. It did not make any sense to grieve over someone whom he had never met or known, but the grief was real, and McKinney knew that he had found a connection with a man who shared his grief.



The next morning, Commander Melanie Leeson and Lieutenant Commander Blake Adams entered Sickbay. The captain and ship’s CMO were standing over the biobed where Ambassador Sras of Andor lay unconscious.

“You’ve taken him out of stasis,” Leeson stated obviously.

Edward nodded. “And I have been able to stop the *Purple Death* from claiming his life,” she said. “The ambassador will make a full recovery within a few days.”

Leeson looked toward the other stasis chambers. “What about them?”

“They will recover as well,” the doctor stated. “I’m going to release them from stasis and administer the same medication that I gave to the ambassador.”

“And where is the human?” Leeson asked, noticing his stasis chamber was empty.

“Yoshi has him in the security section,” Stuart stated. “He’s interrogating the man now.”

“Maybe I can assist Yoshi,” Leeson said as she turned and left Sickbay.

Adams stayed and approached Stuart, who seemed to be standing a little closer

to the doctor than normal. Blake planned on asking his friend and captain about that at a more opportune time. “Starfleet has dispatched the U.S.S. *Exploration* to take our guests back to the Federation, and a frigate will come to tow the *Kennedy*.”

“How long until the *Exploration* arrives?” Stuart asked.

“About five days,” Adams replied. “Fortunately, she had just delivered a diplomatic team to Romulus and hadn’t returned to Starbase 82 yet.”

Stuart smiled and patted his friend on the shoulder, leading him away from the doctor, who was watching over the Andorian ambassador. “I wanted to thank you, Blake,” he said quietly.

“For what?” Blake was surprised.

“For helping me to let down my guard and admit that my feelings for her are deeper than I thought.”

“So, what about Janice?” Blake prodded. “How does *she* feel?”

“She cares deeply for me as well,” Stuart stated.

Blake grabbed his captain’s hand and shook it vigorously. “When is the wedding?” He whispered the question so that the doctor would not hear.

“We’re not ready to discuss a wedding yet, Blake.” Rob shot his friend a look that would intimidate most people. “We will continue to take one step at a time.”

Blake winked at his friend, who he knew would take many of those ‘one steps at a time’ a lot sooner than he would expect.



Janice Edwards waited in the corridor. The door she stood in front of slid open, revealing Lieutenant Raymond Reynolds wearing a newly replicated uniform from his era. He stepped into the corridor, faced Edwards, and pulled down his maroon jacket.

“How do I look, Doctor?”

“Like a true Starfleet officer. Have you decided what you want to do after getting back to Earth?” Edwards turned and slowly walked toward an open turbolift door, Reynolds walking beside her.

“I had a younger sister that I may try to look up, to see if she is still alive,” he said. “I’ve been out of touch with society for a while, but I still want to make a difference. I’m just not sure what that might be.”

“Perhaps you can teach at the Academy,” Leeson suggested.

“I’m afraid that I’m too outdated to qualify,” he countered. “Today’s cadets probably know more than I do.” Reynolds paused as he and Edwards entered the

turbolift, the door sliding shut behind them.

“Transporter Room One,” Edwards instructed the computer.

“What could I teach *them*?”

The doctor placed her hand on the elderly man’s shoulder. “You could teach them the history of your time in Starfleet.”

Reynolds pondered Doctor Edwards’ suggestion. “You have given me something to consider, Doctor.”



Captain Stuart and Commander Leeson exchanged farewells with Ambassador Sras and his aids, now fully recovered from their encounter with the *Purple Death*. Stuart and Leeson watched as the Andorians dematerialized in the transporter beam.

“Did you ever find out who our would-be assassin is?” the captain asked.

Leeson frowned. He claims that his name is Ralph Cramer,” she said. “And he denies any involvement in what happened to the Andorians.”

“But I’m sure that you did some background checks through the computer files,” Stuart commented.

“I found some obscure information about his suspected involvement with a group that believes that they are protecting the Federation,” Leeson said. “I have my doubts.”

“Would this group be known as Section 31?” Stuart asked his first officer.

Leeson’s mouth dropped open. “You know about Section 31?”

Stuart nodded. “I’ve heard of them. And from what I hear, they need to be disbanded. I want him off my ship.”

Leeson saw the concern on Stuart’s face. “Yoshi had him beamed directly to a cell in the *Exploration*’s brig.”

“Good,” Stuart said just as Edwards and Reynolds entered the room.

Reynolds immediately strolled behind the control console where CPO John McKinney stood watch. “I have requested that your grandfather’s belongings be transferred to your quarters and his service record be downloaded from *Kennedy*’s computer records,” the older man said, extending his hand in friendship. “He was a good friend and a great man.”

McKinney grasped Reynolds’ hand and pulled him into a firm hug, acknowledging their shared bond with the late Donald Sims. “Thank you, sir.”

Reynolds wiped a tear from his eye as he turned to face Stuart, Leeson, and Edwards. “Thank you for everything, Doctor.”

Edwards smiled and kissed the old man on the cheek. “Are you going to be alright?”

“I’m a man out of time,” Reynolds said. “It is like waking up from a sixty-year nap, but I think that I will be okay.”

Reynolds shook Stuart’s hand as he stepped up to the transport platform. “Thank you, Captain.”

“Would you like us to relay any messages to other *Kennedy* survivors in case we run into them out here?”

Reynolds remembered those who stayed on the ship and those who chose to leave. He had once felt much anger toward those who had left, but the years had changed the anger to...he didn’t know what he felt toward those who had left. Did they make it to some planet? Were any still alive? “No, Captain. No message.”

With Raymond Reynolds’ last words, Chief McKinney beamed the survivor of the U.S.S. *Kennedy* to the starship *Exploration* for his return trip home.

Melanie Leeson turned to face Stuart and Edwards. “Do you think others from the *Kennedy* might still be alive?”

Stuart thought about that. “Perhaps,” he said. “Perhaps.”

To be continued...