

Ensign Kelly Stuart stood on the second-floor balcony of her parents' mountain home looking toward San Francisco. As the sun began to sink into the ocean, she realized that this probably would be the last real sunset that she would see for several months or even years unless she would be fortunate enough to participate on an away team. Since she was only an ensign fresh out of the Academy, participation on an away mission did not seem likely. At least not in the foreseeable future.

Kelly heard the glass door slide open. She did not turn, assuming that her mother who had come to check on her daughter. "That was a great dinner, Mom."

"Then maybe you should tell your mother that," Kelly's great-uncle said in his characteristic baritone voice.

Kelly turned and smiled. "Sorry, Uncle Bob. I thought you were Mom."

"Obviously." The eldest surviving Hathaway returned Kelly's smile. "I thought I would share the night air with you, if you wouldn't mind."

"I'm glad to share it with you." Kelly turned back to face the setting sun, which was now more than halfway below the horizon. "I was just thinking about what life will be like aboard a starship."

"You spent the first fifteen years of your life on a starship, Kelly." Bob Hathaway stepped up to his niece's side and let her hold onto his arm.

"That was different. I wasn't a member of the crew."

"No. But your experiences, even as a civilian, helped prepare you for your chosen career." Bob pointed to a point of light to the right of the sun. There she is, Kelly. There's your first ship."

Kelly saw the twinkling light. "How do you know that's the *Providence*?"

"Because that is the geosynchronous position of the only drydock large enough to handle the Paragon-class starships." Bob kept his gaze on the light in the sky. "Your dad told me that *Providence* was transferred from Utopia Planitia to the drydock this morning."

Kelly's expression betrayed her surprise. "I thought the ship would launch directly from Mars orbit."

"The Paragon-class starships are still new enough to attract the media. An official sendoff from Earth makes the most sense."

"I suppose so."

"So, when do you go onboard?"

"I have to report by 1300 hours tomorrow. I have been assigned to the planetary sciences department, and my department head wants to meet with his staff shortly after orientation."

"I'm sure you'll do fine. You will proudly contribute to Starfleet just as your family has done for generations."

Kelly turned to face her great-uncle; she saw the strength and pride that he felt for her. She knew that he was a man who did not give compliments or encouragement unless he meant it. Kelly found out a little about those in her family who had served with distinction, but knew little about her uncle's service before he had been the Chief of Starfleet Operations. "What was the best thing that ever happened to you in your career, Uncle Bob?"

Bob Hathaway stroked his white beard as he thought back through the decades. "I served in Starfleet for almost 60 years, but my fondest memories are of the eight years that I commanded the *USS Majestic*."

"Was that your first command?"

"No. It was my second. I actually commanded three different starships before serving at Starfleet Command, but the *Majestic* was the ship that felt like my home away from home. She was special."

"What was special about it?"

"Some say a ship is just a ship, and that may be true; but I believe that a ship is more than just duranium alloy and nuts and bolts filled with technological advances. The people who serve on a ship transfer part of themselves into it."

"Dad said the same thing about the second *Providence*."

"And someday you'll be telling your kids about your *Providence*...or one of the other ships that you will serve on. There's always one that each person serves on that is special to him or her."

Kelly leaned into her uncle's shoulder and tightened her grip on his arm. "What's out there, Uncle Bob? What will I find?"

"There are all sorts of wonders that await you, but there are dangers as well. All are opportunities to learn, and to make a difference. And among the many wonders, you will discover who you are. That will be the most important discovery that you will ever make."

Kelly smiled as she let her eyes move back to gaze at the small dot of light reflecting off her ship that waited overhead. "What did you learn out there?"

“I learned that I had to wear many hats: protector, decision maker, diplomat. Most of all, I learned that I was an explorer.”

Kelly gazed into her uncle’s eyes. She always knew that he was a man of deep conviction, but she never realized how much wisdom and understanding that he personified. “Uncle Bob?”

“Yes, Kelly?”

“Will you tell me about one of your missions? What made you realize that you were an explorer?”

Bob remained silent for several seconds. He smiled at his niece. “I think I truly realized who I was during my time as captain of the *Majestic*. I had been ordered to transport an ambassador to the planet Zarab. The Zarabians had been committing acts of aggression against civilian cargo vessels that traveled along established Federation shipping lanes. It was imperative that our mission succeeded.”

Space, the Final Frontier...

Star Trek: Legacy

“Heart of an Explorer” By Cleve Johnson

Captain’s log, stardate 34319.6:

We are on our way to the desert planet Zarab in the Theta Cygni star system to deliver Ambassador Thomas Reed, who has been assigned to establish formal relations with the Zarabians. Although I have doubts that any progress can be made with this species due to their continued attacks on civilian shipping lanes in spite of Starfleet intervention, I wish him the best of luck. Maybe I’m just cynical, or maybe my experience with other warrior cultures has taught me to expect the worst when dealing with them. The ambassador has objected to my insistence on maintaining a strong military posture, but I have the responsibility for the safety of my ship and crew.

“We are now entering orbit, Captain.”

“Thank you, Mister Gardner. Please inform the ambassador that we have arrived at Zarab.”

“No need, Captain.” Ambassador Reed exited the turbolift. “Please contact the planetary government and inform them of our arrival. Tell them that I will beam down at their convenience.”

Captain Hathaway stepped within a meter of the ambassador to face him. Hathaway put his hands behind his back and spoke quietly to the diplomat. “With all due respect, Ambassador, I cannot allow you to put yourself in such a vulnerable position.”

“I’m afraid you have no choice in the matter, Captain. My orders are to negotiate a peace treaty with the Zarabians to stop the attacks on our shipping lanes. And I have authority over you in this matter.”

“I have orders directly from the CinC to keep you safe, regardless of any orders that you give that might jeopardize your safety.” Hathaway leaned closer to the Ambassador. “Sir, I want this mission to succeed as much as you do, but I will not put the mission above your life.”

Thomas Reed forced himself to stand taller as he glared at the captain. “What makes you think you know better than me when it comes to negotiations?”

Hathaway narrowed his eyes as he returned the ambassador’s stare. “When it comes to negotiations, I’m sure I don’t know as much as you, Ambassador. But I have thirty years of experience dealing with aliens and more cultures than I can remember. I’ve also had a fair share of experience with arrogant commanders and diplomats who went into unknown situations half-cocked, thinking that they were in control of those situations. Half of those learned from their mistakes. The other half didn’t have a chance to learn.”

Thomas Reed clenched his fists, but he quickly forced himself to relax. He nodded slightly and allowed himself an ever-so-slight grin. “Do you think I’m arrogant, Captain?”

“I allow for the possibility, sir.”

Reed’s grin widened to a full-fledged toothy smile. “You ever think about politics, Captain?”

“No sir. I’m just a simple Starfleet officer. All I want to do is seek out new life and new civilizations.”

“Don’t you consider the Zarabians a new civilization? Don’t you think there are discoveries to be made here?”

“The only thing we have discovered about the Zarabians, so far, is that they are an aggressive species bent on attacking our shipping lanes. I prefer the civilizations that we encounter to be less hostile.”

“So do I, Captain, but we don’t always get what we want.” Reed turned away and started toward the turbolift. He entered and turned to face Hathaway. “I’ll trust you to get the Zarabians to agree on a meeting place that will be acceptable to your over-protectiveness.”

Hathaway waited until the turbolift door closed. Once it did, he turned toward his first officer, who doubled as the tactical officer. “Maintain a defensive posture, Rick. Keep shields up. Put the weapons on standby, but keep them hot.”

“Aye sir.”

Hathaway turned to face the communications officer. “Lieutenant Chang, hail the Zarabians.”

* * *

“So what happened, Uncle Bob?” Kelly looked intently into the retired admiral’s eyes as her excitement turned to impatience.

Bob Hathaway smiled at his great-niece. “Well, to my surprise, the Zarabians agreed to meet aboard my ship. I immediately suspected that they had an ulterior motive, of course.”

“Were you right?”

“Oh, most certainly. I ordered security to discreetly keep a close eye on our guests, which is probably what saved us. Some of the junior members of the delegation were caught trying to plant a bomb in the shuttle bay.”

“I bet that ended the negotiations, didn’t it?”

“You could say that.” Bob put his arm around Kelly. “I, along with several security guards, burst into the conference room where the ambassador and his Zarabian counterpart were meeting.”

* * *

“The negotiations are over, Mister Ambassador. Lieutenant Chavez, escort this Zarabian *gentleman* and his staff back to their ship. They are leaving.”

“What is the meaning of this, Captain Hathaway?” Ambassador Reed screamed. “I’ll have your command for this.”

“If your Zarabian friends stay onboard, there won’t be a command for you to have. Your *esteemed* colleague’s associates were caught planting an explosive device in the shuttle bay. They also had a remote control to detonate it after their departure.”

“Mister Haroon, can you explain this?” Reed’s glare bore into the Zarabian delegate’s eyes for several seconds before the alien responded.

“We will do all that is necessary to keep out invaders. Your Federation has no right to infringe on our sovereignty.”

“We have no intention of infringing on your sovereignty, Mister Haroon.”

“That is what the others told my people nearly two centuries ago. They murdered thousands, but we prevailed against them. We will prevail against your kind as well, *Ambassador*.”

“Please, Mister Haroon, I and my government only want peace between our peoples. I assure you that we will not interfere with the natural development of your world.”

“I do not hear your words, Ambassador. I will return to my world and prepare my people for war against your Federation.”

“Captain? Can you help me here?”

“I certainly can, Ambassador. Mister Haroon, I have been a soldier when necessary, but I prefer peace. I am an explorer who searches this galaxy to learn about the unknown wonders that await me. I seek out life in all of its diversity, other cultures, and other planets. I don’t seek out other races, such as yours, to conquer or take advantage. I do it to learn and increase knowledge of what is beyond my own world and my own comprehension.”

“I do not believe you, Captain.”

“That is your choice, but you better believe me when I say that the Federation wants peace; however, we will protect ourselves and our ships from any attack by your people. Our shipping lanes are more than three light years outside of your star system. I will recommend to my superiors that the Federation declare your system off limits per your request. We will leave you alone if you leave us alone.”

“And if we do not agree?”

“We will meet any attack with adequate strength to keep you confined to your own world until your grandchildren’s grandchildren are elders in your clan.”

“I do not like threats, Captain Hathaway.”

“Neither do I, Mister Haroon. Neither do I.”

“I will take your words back to the planetary council for consideration.”

“I truly hope that you choose to decide for peace.”

Haroon and the members of his staff left the conference under guard, and soon their shuttle departed.

“You were not very diplomatic, Captain.” Ambassador Reed allowed himself an uncharacteristic smirk.

“Sometimes, Ambassador, the best diplomat is the threat of a fully charged phaser bank.”

* * *

“The last we heard from the Zarabians was a message telling us that they agreed to leave our shipping lanes alone as long as we stayed out of their system.”

“Did the ambassador cause you anymore trouble after that?”

“No, Kelly, he didn’t. I contacted Starfleet Command and requested that they not assign me to any more diplomatic courier cruises. I told them that I wanted to stick to exploration.”

“That’s where your heart is, Uncle.”

Kelly and Bob looked out over the horizon to see the sun slip below it. Bob leaned over and kissed his niece on the cheek, turned, and walked toward the house.

Kelly Stuart smiled and whispered to herself, “That is where my heart is, too.”

* * *

Kelly stepped off the transporter platform and looked around the room. She noticed that the other five junior officers that beamed onboard with her looked just as confused as she felt. A Bajoran chief petty officer motioned the group toward the exit.

When Kelly stepped into the corridor, she got in line behind the others in her group. Each person was greeted by another chief petty officer, a human woman, and directed down the curved hall. The woman approached Kelly.

“Ensign Kelly Stuart, reporting for duty.”

“Welcome aboard, Ensign.” The other woman handed Kelly a data chip. “This has your security codes, room assignment, and itinerary. You have been assigned to deck 12, section G, room 14. Just follow the corridor about twenty meters to the turbolift.”

“Thank you, Chief.” Kelly started toward the turbolift when she noticed a man in his mid-forties approaching. She recognized him immediately since she had met him several years earlier. She stopped and snapped to attention. “Good afternoon, sir.”

The man stopped and smiled. “At ease, Ensign. This isn’t the Academy.” The man suddenly recognized Kelly. “You’re Kelly Stuart, aren’t you?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good to have you aboard,” Captain Eric Kelly said. “Listen, I want to sit down with you sometime. I have some stories about the days I served with your parents that you might be interested in hearing.”

“Thank you, Captain. I would love to hear about those days.”

“I’ll catch up with you in a day or two,” Eric said as he smiled at the young ensign. “I’m off to meet your father and the other brass at Starfleet Command to receive our orders and attend the commissioning ceremony. I’m sure you have plenty to keep you busy as well.”

Kelly returned her CO’s smile. “That I do, sir.” Kelly Stuart watched her captain walk toward the transporter room, and then she turned toward the turbolift to continue on her way to her quarters. The lift doors shut behind her after she entered and turned around. “Deck 12, section G,” she said to the computer. She smiled as she realized that it was now her time to contribute to the family legacy.

The End