CAPTAIN'S LOG #47





INTO THE EAGLE'S NEST



Horizons's Edge...

The arrival of Jean Sexton marks a change in ADB, Inc., every bit as profound as the time we incorporated and became the *SFU* publisher.

Jean's arrival means a better distribution of the workload among the primary staff, as she takes over some of the duties of everyone else, works more on duties she has held for years (RPGs, marketing), and undertakes new duties that no one has been paying any attention to but which a serious company ignores at its peril.

The rest of us are dedicated to doing our existing jobs better and faster, and to reaching beyond the company's reputation for huge games with old-style components. We will have a lot more to say about new product lines in the next issue. Some of these (e.g., *Tribbles, Traveller*) you have heard of before. More new lines will also appear. Get ready to blast off!

CAPTAIN'S LOG STAFF

PUBLISHER'S INFORMATION

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STAR FLEET HISTORY

Into the Eagle's Nest

By Clint Woodall

February 27, Y169, 2100 Hours Federation Police Cutter *Swanson*, Bridge

"Captain," said the communications officer. "Incoming hail from Starbase 12. Priority one."

Captain Timothy Lester looked up from the panel he had been examining. "Priority *One*, you say?"

"Yes, Sir. It's marked private."

"Hmm." He glanced at his XO, who was raising an eyebrow. "Don't ask me," the XO shrugged.

Lester turned toward the communications officer. "Thanks, Susan. I'll take it in my office."

He left the small bridge, and went into his ready room. As the door closed, he settled his rather plump frame into the wornout chair at his desk. He switched on the screen. "I've got it, Susan"

An officer appeared on the screen, a police admiral. At the sight, Lester breathed a sigh of relief.

"Jeffries. It's only you."

The figure managed to suppress a frown. "That's Admiral Jeffries."

Lester rolled his eyes. Jeffries was the same as he'd always been, even when they had been together back at the police academy over 30 years ago. They had served together on two different police ships; eventually each had been promoted to commander and made the skipper of his own police cutter.

From that time, their careers had diverged. Jeffries was always by-the-book. He never even stretched, let alone violated, a regulation or a doctrine or anything else. The concept of the "spirit of the law" never occurred to him and the universal military excuse for any exception, the famed "exigencies of the situation," had never passed his lips. If sometimes a pirate had gotten away on a legal technicality or a rescue had been delayed by a safety protocol or a cargo had been late because of a navigational hazard, that was just the way it was. The rules protected Jeffries — and Jeffries protected the rules.

Lester, on the other hand, had been a seat-of-the-pants kind of captain. The job was done, the victims were rescued, the pirates were captured, the cargo was delivered on time, the citizens were served, and if that required bending or ignoring a few rules and protocols and regulations, well there were always those "exigencies of the situation" to protect Lester from retaliation. While official medals and commendations were few and far between, unofficial letters of gratitude from colonial governors, merchant captains, minor government officials, and common citizens swelled his personnel file to the bursting point.

When it came time for one of them to be promoted to the full rank of captain and given a police flagship from which to command an entire province and the six police cutters in it, it was Jeffries with his perfect by-the-book record who got the call. When it was time for a police captain to be promoted to commodore and given command of a division, Jeffries (with his immaculate paperwork and his strict enforcement of discipline and the regulations) had been first in line. And when it was time for a division commodore to be promoted to admiral and given command of all police ships in the Sixth Police District on the Romulan border, it

was Jeffries — with his perfect record and his first-name basis with provincial governors — who was selected.

Since then, he'd become even more insufferable.

In command of the *Swanson* far longer than a skipper of a police cutter should be, the Federation Police had promoted Commander Lester to the rank of captain and left him where he was. Captain Lester was simply too effective to force into retirement or promote into some staff position. Officially, his ship was not part of a provincial squadron, but was the "special assignment" ship for the division. That meant that Lester and *Swanson* were sent to handle situations that "the book" could not handle. That gave Lester a feeling of invincibility. To be sure, his division commodore and Jeffries, the commander of the frontier, hated him, but they could not be rid of him because he got the job done when no one else could.

That arrogance showed when Lester had to talk to Jeffries, who was, in the chain of command, the boss of his boss.

"Whatever you say, Chief," Lester said with a smile.

"Don't call me that," Jeffries snapped.

"Yes, Admiral."

"Better." Jeffries cleared his throat. "We are contacting you about an urgent matter, a mission of grave importance. Now ideally, you would not be my first choice. But considering the circumstances..."

"Is he on?" said another voice. An older man came into view. He pulled up a seat, forcing a flustered Jeffries to move over. The man smiled. "Hello, Captain Lester."

"Admiral Green." Lester smiled. "Good to see you." If a Star Fleet admiral were contacting a police cutter captain, it meant that Star Fleet was "borrowing" a police ship to handle some errand or special mission. Admiral Green was the chief of staff for the Sixth Fleet, normally concerned only with logistical and administrative issues, but many times it was Admiral Green, not the operations chief, Admiral Hayabusa, who gave him the assignment. That meant that the assignment was off-the-books and not part of official operations. Lester did not mind, since every mission he did for Star Fleet meant a while longer that he would be protected from Jeffries.

"Sir, I must protest," began Jeffries. "This captain is in no way suited for this job. If you only look at this dossier..."

"I know his record," Green waved the data tablet away. "He's had his share of run-ins with the Romulans before and he's done good work for me in the past. Besides, we need a police ship for this, he's in position, and we're out of time."

Lester frowned. "What's this about, Sir?"

"This is a matter of Federation security. Set a course for the Neutral Zone. I am transmitting the coordinates now."

Lester watched the console. "Coordinates received."

"Tell your crew to get underway immediately at your highest possible speed. We'll wait."

Lester nodded, switching the screen to contact the bridge. After a brief conference with his XO, he returned.

"It's done."

"Excellent," Admiral Green said.

"What is this mission. Sir?"

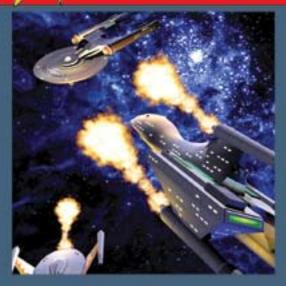
"Tell me, Captain. Have you heard of research station Zeta Nine?"

"I've heard of it."

"What do you know about it?"

"Not much." Lester shrugged. "It's not on my beat."

CAPTAIN'S LOG



STANDOFF!

It began as a police matter: a Romulan police ship was harassing a Federation transport. Then the transport tried to defect, the Romulans started shooting. and the Federation police fired back. It got really interesting when a Romulan Eagle squadron uncloaked and Commodore Stocker's squadron rushed to join the confrontation.

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