

One of Our XO's is Missing

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SECURE SUBSPACE ORDERS

To: CPT Devlin, USS Stellar Wind

From: UFP via Starfleet HQ

In order to return newly elected President Updike to the Federation as rapidly as possible, a high speed VIP courier ship with Irrelevant drive will be dispatched to pick him up tomorrow. You are ordered to turn on your Subspace Irrelevant Drive Beacon from 1300 to 1330 hours tomorrow. Updike will leave shortly after the courier arrives. Your new XO will arrive on a subsequent courier ship.

Information on the new Executive Officer is attached.

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"*Cor Blimey!*" Boffin exclaimed as he looked over the incomplete message from HQ. "I'd better tell the Captain about this."

The Captain's Yeoman rushed from his desk and into the Ready Room of the *Stellar Wind* CO. He handed her the padd with the message.

She leaned back in her chair and looked at Boffin. *So, she considered ironically, I am left to have HQ foist yet another Executive Officer upon me. I do wish they had trusted me to choose my own XO, but I suspect that our previous XO, now the newly elected Federation President might have had something to do with that 'oversight'.*

She finally spoke to Boffin, "As much as I didn't like Updike, I don't think he'd give a toss on who would replace him as XO. It'll be bad enough telling him how much I enjoyed having him as XO." She paused to issue a wry smile. "I seriously don't think he enjoyed being XO all that much under my command. But the fact that I'll have to say this in front of all my senior officers won't make my day at all."

"Will Louise be going with him," Boffin asked.

"As far as I know, Ms Upperton will accompany him, besides, our XO being elected President is too good a story not to continue with it."

"That's true, Sir."

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"Mr. Gateway," she began as she rose, "I have a meeting with Petty Officer Peckerwood when I get back. Just have him wait in my office until I return." She stopped and inwardly sighed to herself not wanting yet another briefing on why gamma widgets were being used instead of delta widgets.

"Boffin, get on to Communications, get the Chief if you must and secure a clean copy." She looked back down to her chronometer, frowned, and dashed out her office.

Boffin, in turn, left the Ready Room and went back to his own desk to contact the Communications Officer on duty who, much to his delight, just happened to be Simone, who, unfortunately for Boffin, didn't want anything to do with him.

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The Senior Officers were lined up at attention in the Deck 3 Officer's Lounge. A young yeoman escorted Commander Senior Grade Updike in and presented him to Captain Devlin. Updike stood at attention.

Arcadia unenthusiastically spoke the ritual lines required of her. "Commander Updike. As a Starfleet Officer who has been duly elected to the Presidency of the United Federation of Planets, Starfleet here by promotes you to Fleet Admiral Retired as per regulations. Congratulations, Sir. I was pleased to have you as my First Officer."

Updike shook her hand. "Thank you Captain. It was a pleasure to serve with you. You are a fine person and an excellent Commanding Officer. Your concern for your crew and ship at all times was an example to us all."

"Thank you, Sir."

Updike grinned. "Now Captain, I see no reason for everyone to be standing around at attention unless you want them that way. I do not need the formality."

Arcadia forced a smile in the new President's direction as she told her officers, "At ease, Gentlemen."

"I will get out of your hair so you can do your job without my bothering you. The courier ship will be here shortly."

* * *

President Franklin Updike met reporter Louise Upperton as they were both approaching transporter Room One. They were alone.

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"Hello Louise. Are you leaving now too?" Updike asked.

"You know I am. You are where the news is at and I'm sticking with you to get it."

"Thank you. I will be glad to... have you."

Louise almost lost her resolve at that but went ahead anyway. Her pocket recorder was running. "Franklin, I know you caused all the leaks and the... other things."

"Knowing it and proving it are two different things," was his unconcerned response.

Louise was startled. "You're not denying it! When I get back and combine the data I have here with the information on earth, I will be able to prove it. But why?"

Updike pressed some buttons on his datapadd. "Power. I was tired of being passed over and tired of taking orders from the unintelligent and uneducated." Updike stopped as the UFP escort approached.

Before the UFP guards reached them, Louise pulled the recorder from her pocket and showed it to Updike.

He just shrugged and pressed a spot on the screen of his padd. As the guards tried to separate them, Updike intervened. "She is going to Earth too and can come with me."

Louise and Franklin watched as the security team beamed off the ship ahead of them. Louise and Franklin then stepped onto the platform and sparkled away. The second detachment of guards was about to step up when the alarm went off.

The voice of the operator on the other end announced, "*Attention Stellar Wind, This is a Priority Order. Lock All Transporter Room controls immediately. There has been a malfunction. Louise Upperton did not arrive and is presumed dead.*"

* * *

With the arrival of the courier ship with the new *Stellar Wind* XO, there was quite a bit of activity in the transporter room. Tony observed the last of the personnel and material from the courier ship as it was off-loaded. As he watched the passing parade, he heard the beginnings of what could be a disturbance down the hall and the security officer assigned to escort the new

XO became left to investigate the loud discussion that was turning into a potentially major fracas.

All Tony was able to discern from the disturbance was the fact that the voices were becoming louder and louder with several parties discussing ancestors and one's resemblance thereof. Everyone in the transporter room stopped what they were doing to listen. Tony assumed they had stopped to eavesdrop but he was sure that when they were questioned, they would say that they were simply exercising prudent judgement by staying out of harm's way. When the noise finally died down, the crowd waiting for a lull in the action finally received their wish and departed to various points on the ship.

The only person to buck the crowd out the door was the security officer assigned to escort the new XO. He suddenly stopped to look around the now empty transporter room. His eyebrows shot up to his hairline and he looked to Tony intently. "Well?"

Tony stared back at him with a very puzzled expression. "Well, what?"

"The new Executive Officer!" he shouted.

Tony looked back to the security officer waiting for an answer and shrugged. "I guess the new XO left."

"Great, just great. The Old Man will have my cajones and the Old Lady won't be too pleased either." He looked back to Tony and then departed the transporter room, leaving Tony even more puzzled than ever.

* * *

Arcadia was busily working on her never-ending mountain of paperwork when she was interrupted by an emergency call from the senior engineer on duty informing her of an accident in the transporter room.

She told them to shut the transporters down and run a complete diagnostic. When she finished giving out that order, she contacted the bridge to be put in touch with the CO of the courier ship to verify for herself that Louise had been killed in the transporter accident.

* * *

Lieutenant Silver Talia decided to start her investigation at the top. When she had arrived at her desk, there was a message from the Chief of Security asking her to "find the XO!" Seems he or she had not been actually seen since he came aboard. Silver decided to check with Captain Devlin first. After all, most people check in with their bosses when they come aboard and the Captain was the

XO's boss. Therefore, if she knew he was aboard or at least what was going on, then the hunt was over.

Boffin had waved her into the "inner sanctum." She entered the Captain's Ready Room and stood at attention waiting to be recognized. Captain Devlin motioned her to be at ease, offered her a chair then asked why she was there.

"Captain, the Chief has asked me to find the XO. Do you know where he is?"

Before she responded, Captain Devlin leaned back in her chair and sighed audibly. "Silver, running a starship is a frustrating affair and I realize this, but this business about the missing XO really takes the biscuit."

Silver listened patiently as the Captain continued.

"Every bloody message that we have received from SFHQ personnel concerning the new XO has been garbled." Captain Devlin paused. "I don't even bloody know what the new XO's name is!" Realizing that she was becoming angrier by the minute, she paused again, regaining her composure. "This is becoming a nuisance."

Captain Devlin rose from her chair and Silver immediately duplicated her. "I suggest that you speak to my yeoman because he's handled all of the message traffic we've received."

Silver took her statement as a dismissal and left the ready room. If she had ever gotten a negative from someone who had not actually said no to the question, the Captain had given her one. She sighed shaking her head, this was not really what she was trained to do. She was an undercover information gatherer, not an interrogation operator. Too bad Bill wasn't doing the job; he was actually good at this process. She went in search of Boffin.

Boffin handed her a padd with transcripts of the HQ communications, before she could ask for them. She thought to herself, *I'd have Kem look at the original recordings. If anything is hidden, he will be able to find it.* To Boffin, she said, "Apparently you know I'm looking for the XO and what I want. What do you know?"

"Lieutenant, the original file attached to the message informing the Captain of the new XO was scrambled in transmission," began Boffin in his smooth baritone. "I informed the Captain of this fact and she told me to contact Communications. I spoke to the communication's officer on duty."

"Lieutenant Simone Templar was cooperative but had no further luck than I did in extracting any useable information from the file from Starfleet Personnel. I sent a second request for the personnel file and that second file was corrupt

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upon receipt. Captain Devlin herself sent the third request herself, this time 'Captain to Captain' in hopes that a direct request from the ship's CO would carry an additional priority. We have yet to receive a response to the third request."

Boffin completed his recitation and smiled at Silver who indicated to him that she had received all the information that she needed.

Silver sat down at the desk in the XO's sitting room. She had already checked the XO's office, and not only was there no evidence of an XO having been around, there was no evidence of an XO's Yeoman either. Obviously, Yeoman Seville had been reassigned when Updike had left. Now that she thought about it, Silver seemed to recall that Seville had been bumped up in rank and given another job entirely -- probably through some of Updike's machinations. *Oh well*, she thought, *working for Updike had to have been good for something*.

The XO's quarters were obviously not inhabited. The only thing left to check before interviewing the crew was the computer. Silver activated the terminal and said, "Computer, display the location of the XO?"

There was a longer pause than expected, as if the computer was working on a logic problem. Then a map of Federation Space came up on the screen showing the location where Updike's ship had disappeared.

Silver sighed. "Computer, who is the current XO of the *Stellar Wind*?"

"Unknown."

"Did the XO come on board?"

"Unable to answer."

That warranted an explanation. "Computer, why are you unable to answer."

"The Executive Officer has not checked in with the computing system and no one has logged the Executive Officer as being on board."

"Then that would indicate the XO never arrived. Correct?"

"Negative."

"Why?"

"The Executive Officer was scheduled to come on board several days ago."

"Well, did he or didn't he?"

"Unknown?"

Silver sighed. The computer was usually not this obtuse, so there must be a partial data problem. "Computer, explain fully -- no cancel that." She had almost asked for too much. "Computer, briefly summarize all the events that led to uncertainty about the XO being on board or not?"

"The Executive Officer was scheduled to come on board seven days ago. The transport took place as scheduled. Not all the transportees are accounted for. Lower ranked crew often do not get checked into the computer for up to four weeks. Incoming messages concerning the Executive Officer have been unintelligible. No confirmed messages have been received or sent by the Executive Officer. Some crew members are doing work apparently for the Executive Officer. The following jobs are related to the Executive Officer: the"--

"Stop!" Silver quickly interjected. "Computer expand the summary by fifteen percent and dump it to my account. Include a list of all potential sightings of the XO with personnel names and schedules. Continue to add new entries as they come in and flag them as new. Acknowledge."

"Acknowledged. Program activated."

Silver shut down the terminal and thought, *I guess I'll have to do this the hard way and talk to everyone--*" She checked her chronometer, *but not till after lunch.*

* * *

Sebastian Stoaat licked his whiskers and pushed away his dinner tray. He spent a delightful evening celebrating the results of his physical exam, his upcoming promotion to Ensign -- yet to be confirmed, but he was sure he had it -- and dinner with Virgil and Boffin. His tail was wagging with anticipation and his blue eyes shown so brightly that Virgil couldn't help but comment.

"Sebastian, I don't remember you being this excited since the altercation at Hornblower station a while back."

"I'm glad I gave that one a miss," exclaimed Boffin as he knocked back another Romulan ale.

Sebastian smiled -- though to most, it looked like a grimace -- and licked his feline chops. "Very true and what a fine fight that was," mused Sebastian as he sat back on his haunches. Everyone proceeded to finish up the last of his meal and drinks when Boffin broke the silence.

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"I had an interesting morning, mates," began Boffin. "Seems that the rumors about our new XO is missing are true."

"*Missing?*" exclaimed both Virgil and Sebastian.

Boffin told them both about the morning's interview with Silver.

"So," began Virgil with a mischievous smile, "did you put the moves on Silver?"

"*Blimey!*" replied Boffin with all the indignity he could summon, "No I didn't -- not my type, mate."

"Aha... I see..." responded Virgil with a wink to Sebastian.

"Speaking of ladies, gents, I understand that Simone's unattached again," Sebastian commented with a sly grin towards Virgil.

"Oh?" replied Virgil, noncommittally.

"I thought she was busy," Boffin said.

"Oh... well..." stammered Virgil, "If she's going around with someone, I don't think I have a chance."

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained," replied Sebastian as he got up from the table and fluffed out his tail. "See you later, gents!"

"Later, Sebastian," Virgil and Boffin said as they both also rose to leave.

* * *

"Boris?" Aubrey asked, quite confused not expecting to see PO/3 Boris Brown, the Physical Geographer on duty this morning.

"Good morning, Lieutenant," Boris replied as he went over to the replicator. "Yeah, I was supposed to have done the mission this morning, but there was a last minute change. Coffee, Sir?"

"Yes, thank you. The usual if you don't mind." Aubrey paused for a moment. "Damned shame about Louise's accident."

"You're right Sir, no one should ever get 'lost' in a transporter. I take it they didn't find anything?"

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"Not that I understand, Boris. Everything checked out on our end and the courier ship that was supposed to take Updike back to Earth said that everything checked out on their end."

"And then they disappeared?"

"Apparently, Boris. Then, I suspect that not too many people are crying about that either. The man who would be President..."

"True, Sir." Boris became silent.

Aubrey changed the subject. "Have you heard anything about this new XO?"

"Not a thing Sir," replied Boris as he handed Aubrey his morning brew.

"Seems very strange if you ask me. Usually, they make a big fuss about a new Head coming on board, this but time, not a peep."

"I wouldn't worry about it sir. The way that this crew likes to throw parties, I'm sure we'll be invited to something or other." Boris paused and looked to Aubrey. "Well, at least *you* will," he continued with a mischievous grin.

Aubrey almost choked on his coffee. "True, very true." Aubrey paused to wipe the spilled coffee from his tunic.

* * *

Captain Devlin carefully read the reports on her link. She scanned the final report on the transporter accident that apparently killed report Louise Upperton V and then the disappearance of the courier ship transporting newly elected President of the Federation, Franklin Updike II. Having satisfied her curiosity, she turned her attention to the other report on her desk. Finally, she had the answer to the question puzzling her for some time now. Apparently, their shadows -- the unknown assailants that would attack the ship and then run -- were sent to track the '*Wind*' were those of a hostile planet. And these people assumed that the '*Wind*' was there to assist the Aldorans (*who ever the hell they are*, she mused as she read the report). When SFHQ finally sent her with the whole story, Captain Devlin and her crew had already successfully fought off the hostile forces. SFHQ suggested (*ordered* sighed Arcadia) that the *Stellar Wind* conclude their planet surveys and make a side trip to Aldora to accept their appreciation in person.

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"...And I thank you again, President, for extending your hospitality to my crew. I'm sure they will enjoy shore leave on your planet as soon as all repairs are completed."

Arcadia exchanged further pleasantries with the Leader of the Aldora and then snapped off the comlink. She leaned back in her chair only to realize that since the XO can not be located -- much to her total disgust and amazement -- she had to get the ball rolling, so to speak, concerning shore leave. She fully expected the new XO to be on the courier ship and therefore opted not to appoint an acting XO at least until Lieutenant Silver Talia had completed her investigations.

She rose from her desk and walked out into the outer offices. "Boffin, it looks like the crew is going to get that shore leave they've been on about of late."

"Bloody wonderful!" Boffin exclaimed. "I was beginnin' to wonder about getting off of this 'ere ship! *Cor Blimey*, I could use some R&R. Mam'selle, when do you-
_"

Boffin interrupted himself when he spied Master Chief Petty Officer Thockmorton Peckerwood arriving for his rescheduled appointment. "Master Chief Peckerwood, please have a seat while I inform the Captain you are here."

Arcadia had just enough time to sneak back into her office and seat herself. Even the momentary good news of shore leave couldn't over come yet another discussion on gamma widgets.

"Master Chief, please come in and sit down and tell me all about the widgets," she told him in a voice laced with all the professionalism she could muster. Luckily for her, this was her last appointment and she looked forward to going back to her quarters for a much-needed rest.

"Thank you fer seeing me. Well, ma'am..." began Peckerwood in his thick southern accent.

* * *

INTERDECK HARD COPY
FROM: Captain Arcadia Devlin
TO: Attention All Hands!

The Leaders of the Aldora have graciously allowed us to have shore leave on their planet for the next few days. Please contact your immediate supervisor for the leave schedule.

Devlin out.

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Pest Control Officer, Sebastian Stoa was able to go and enjoy the Aldoran festivities earlier than he expected. Unfortunately, Virgil was still hard at work repairing the Nighthawks. He knew how fussy Commander Argent was when it came to his 'hawks, so Virgil figured he'd visit the planet later when he had time.

Sebastian trotted around the town square, taking in the sights and sounds. He was especially intrigued by all the food and was glad to note that most of the town's people didn't mind being talked to by what seemed to them to be an over-grown housecat.

Though Sebastian wasn't usually interested in wine and other spirits, the planet's wine was very good and he proceeded to have several small sips. These sips turned into several glasses and by the time he returned to the ship to meet with Virgil, Sebastian was totally intoxicated.

He began to "sing" a felinoid version of "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen" and it was Virgil's opinion that had he been Kathleen, he would have headed for the nearest airlock.

Virgil managed to get Sebastian to his quarters without incident and tucked him into bed. He rushed out of Sebastian's quarters as fast as he could not wanting to hear Sebastian's version of "Danny Boy."

* * *

INTERDECK HARDCOPY

From: Sickbay

To: All Hands

The native wine known as Enterac is extremely potent to most humanoids. It is suggested that you either drink very little or not at all. If you have any further questions, please contact Sickbay.

* * *

Captain's Yeoman Boffin Gateway walked into the Captain's Ready Room where he found her deep in thought. "Captain?"

"What can I do for you, Boffin?"

"There's a priority message from Security, Sir."

"Thank you Mr. Gateway, please put the message through."

Arcadia waited for a moment for the message. It seemed to take longer than usual but once the connection was established, the image of Lieutenant Bill Rasman appeared.

"Sorry to disturb you Captain, but I just wanted you to know that someone else has fallen victim to the effects of the local wine down here."

Arcadia rolled her eyes back. "I see the warning isn't doing the crew much good. I had assumed they could all read and understand 'fleet standard language. You may wish to keep a closer eye on the festivities, Mr. Rasman. If you need additional security officers' down planet, please inform the Chief that he has my approval. Please keep me personally apprised of the situation."

"Aye Captain."

She switched the comlink off and sat back in her chair, letting out an audible sigh. She had this strange feeling that she wasn't going to get much sleep tonight.

* * *

Physical Geographer Boris Brown was sitting at the bar having a drink when it all started. He quickly flashed back to the bar fight at Hornblower Station and figured that he'd better get the hell out before Security was called.

He managed to snake his way through the fists, chairs, and broken glass only to be caught by an elbow to the eye by someone he didn't recognize. He was briefly stunned, but regained his senses enough to make his way out the door.

Boris walked shakily over to the beam-out point and was transported back to the ship. The transporter engineer looked at him questioningly as he stepped off the platform. Boris replied, "Don't ask," while keeping his hand over his eye.

He made his way to Sickbay to receive proper treatment. Luckily, the doctor on call wasn't interested in conversing with him. As she applied a sprayer to his eye, he overheard the reports of the bar fight he just left and the acknowledgement from Sickbay they would send field techs to take care of the wounded.

* * *

By the time Security Officer, Lt. Bill Rasman arrived at the bar "Castle Keep," all was secure -- more or less.

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Though there was little damage, discussions with the crewmembers who still had their wits about them and the townspeople indicated that the wine was to blame. He quickly rounded up those still standing and sent them back to the ship under escort and arranged with Sickbay to send down personnel to attend to the wounded. The uninjured were escorted straight to the brig.

As much as Bill enjoyed his profession and felt great satisfaction from doing a job well done, he really didn't enjoy writing his report this evening or confirming Captain Devlin's worse fears.

He made a preliminary oral report to her and she seemed to take it in great stride, however, he didn't want to be in the prisoner's shoes when she makes that promised inspection of the brig and the inhabitants in the morning.

* * *

"Morning Sir," PO/3 Boris Brown greeted Lieutenant Aubrey Maturin as he walked into the office.

"Good morning, Boris," replied Aubrey who stopped dead in his tracks and took a good long look at Boris. "What the hell happened to you?"

Boris put his hand to his black eye and winced in pain. "I should have ducked."

Aubrey looked at Boris again, shook his head, and went over to the replicator. "Are you up for coffee?"

"Yes, thank you, Sir." Boris paused for a moment while Aubrey brought him a cup of the steaming brew.

Aubrey sat down at the console, sipped his coffee, and waited for Boris to continue. "OK, Boris, what *did* happen?"

"Well, Sir, a bunch of us were at the 'Castle Keep' bar and what can I say but what a fight!"

"I can see that, Boris," Aubrey said as he spied the beginnings of rainbow colors surrounding the injured eye, "But what hap--"

Once again, a computer program that needed their attention interrupted the men.

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Captain Arcadia Miskinn-Warda Devlin was in a foul mood this morning. Instead of her normal routine of heading to her office, she had to take a detour to deck five.

Generally speaking when Captain Devlin was seen about she tended to greet crewmembers by name and often stopped to chat with them. Not this morning, however. She had just completed a personal briefing with Security and then was shown the brig full of crewmembers that were rounded up during last night's fracas. All she could do was cross her arms in front of her, lean back on her heels, and scowl at the occupants, with a look she hoped pierced all the way to their mortal souls.

By the time she finally arrived at her Ready Room to begin her day, she was furious and this ire was compounded by the fact that her yeoman was late. By the time Boffin had arrived to his duty post, he wished he had taken the day off.

"Mr. Gateway, *get in here!*" bellowed the deep voice of Captain Devlin.

Boffin was instantly overtaken by fear because he knew that the Captain was irritated yet he rushed into her office fearing that any delay would further compound her foul mood.

"Good of you to finally make it to work, Mr. Gateway."

Boffin, noting the scowl still on her face, wisely said nothing.

Captain Devlin stood up and handed Boffin a holodisc. "Please personally deliver this message to all the Heads and tell them and by all means, do quote me: The next crewmember that is injured or creates a pest of him or herself down planet will find himself or herself on latrine duty until Vulcan freezes over!"

Boffin didn't twitch a muscle as Arcadia sat back behind her desk. "Well, what are you waiting for Mr. Gateway, an invitation? Be gone!"

"Yes Sir!" Boffin replied as he rushed out the door, almost falling over his chair, to deliver her message and personally inform each of the Division Heads that the "Dragon Lady" was in rare form this morning, and to do everything in their power to avoid her wrath.

* * *

By the time Arcadia carefully read Silver's report on the missing XO, she was surprisingly calm. "Wonderful. So the XO never arrived?" she said aloud.

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She turned to her comlink and began to compose a message to SFHQ requesting the assignment of a new Executive Officer as soon as possible.

"This," she told herself as she put the finishing touch on the official missive, "is bloody embarrassing."

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