

RETIREMENT  
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## **DISPATCHES: RETIREMENT**

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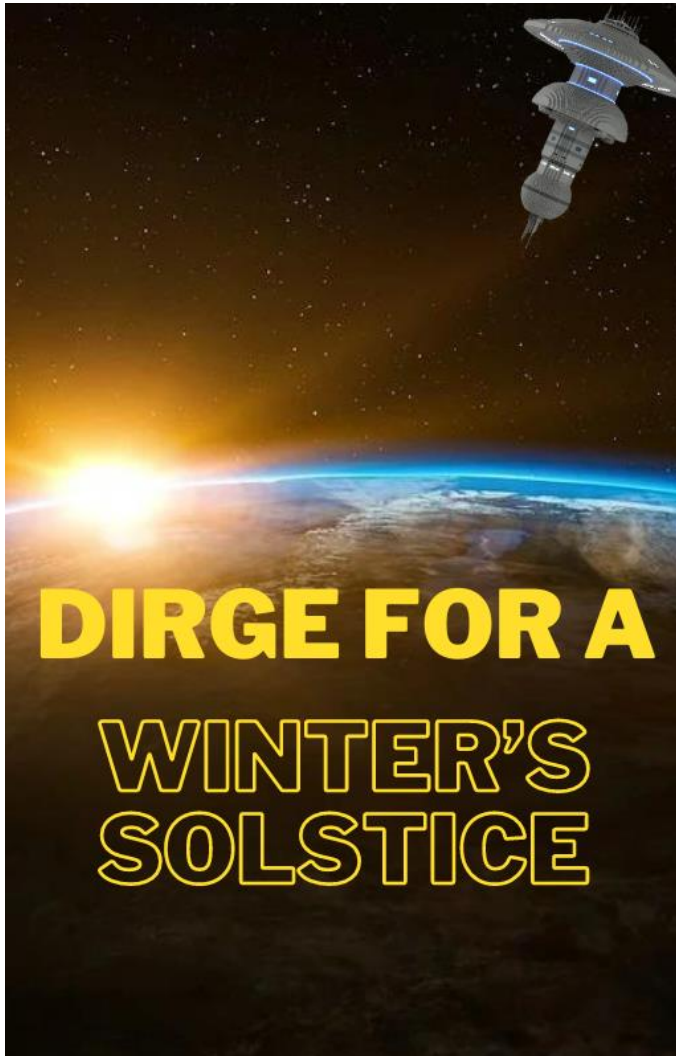
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*"I know you're fond of Mr. Teague, Henry. I'm sensitive to that. The fact is though, you've got the Excelsiors, and the Miranda line takes care of itself at this point. You wanted to know if Theoretical Propulsion Dynamics could pick up the slack if Newport News faltered and I'm telling you emphatically, yes."*

From Dirge For A Winter's Solstice page: 61



## Dispatches: Retirement

The following takes place early in late 2312 following the signing of the Treaty of Algeron and the events of Cor Coroli Convergence.

Following the election of a new Federation President and a perceived period of calm, Starfleet Commander-in-Chief Admiral Henry Wallace has quietly informed the powers that be of his intention to retire from active service. The newly installed President is uncomfortable with the departure of the C-in-C so soon after the election; however, advisors from Contemporaneous Affairs have quietly supported Admiral Wallace's decision to step away.

The former Acting Chief of Starfleet Operations, Xao T'Chou, has only just recently been found guilty of treason and murder following a month's long trial. The death of Admiral Thomas Knot and the crisis provoked by T'Chou have meant priorities at Starfleet Command have shifted towards tighter security and fresh approaches.

In his last meaningful act as Commander-in-Chief, Wallace has taken it upon himself to solidify the Starfleet Design Bureau before ending his watch and by so doing, reinforce Starfleet's infrastructure heading into an unknown future. One key contractor remains active within Starfleet's specialized field of starship design and construction, Hibiki Masaru's Theoretical Propulsion Dynamics. Since the unexplained disappearance of Dannar Teague nearly three years earlier, Starfleet's ability to build and innovate new ship designs has been greatly hampered.

Wallace is aware that new threats requiring new thinking loom on the horizon. The all-consuming *Upgrade* Program which saw the relics purged from active service and new ship production greatly amplified lay bare the

need to centralize starship design and construction. In the face of a crisis the Federation's ability to defend and protect itself was called into question.

As he prepares to leave, Henry hopes to assemble the fragmented civilian contractors who've profited from Starfleet's needs over the last century and mold an efficient, new Institution out of the remnants of an industry Teague had left in disarray. Wallace chooses to do this in the face of his own jaded revelations of the organization he'd spent his life serving and risks destroying one of his last surviving friendships in the process...

# **DISPATCHES: RETIREMENT**

**A short story**

**By: Glenn G G Maitland.**

## APPROACH

The private shuttle circled the outermost beacon on the fringe of Starfleet Command's restricted airspace. Hibiki leaned back in his seat and watched as the afternoon sun sparkled off the rough waters around San Francisco Bay and the iconic red Golden Gate Bridge spun slowly out of sight of the circling shuttle. Ryuji sat across from the founder and CEO of Theoretical Propulsion Dynamics. He was wholly focussed on a PADD of construction updates and didn't notice the beauty spreading out beyond the small red TPD high-speed atmospheric shuttle.

"TPD 1-alpha-3, this is Starfleet Approach Control. You are cleared to proceed to the main landing platform. Line-up for pad 3-bravo, copy?"

"Starfleet Command, 1-alpha-3, copy. Proceeding to main platform, pad 3-bravo, over." The young man at the shuttle's controls calmly adjusted the thrusters' trim and brought his nose around. Starfleet Headquarters was a little more than a hundred kilometers ahead.

"TPD 1-alpha-3, Starfleet Approach Control, we have you in tractor range. Reduce your speed to 100 kph and drop to an altitude of five hundred feet above sea level on your current heading. Copy?"

The pilot throttled back and let gravity pull the little red shuttle at a gentle angle towards the ocean below. "Copy Starfleet Command, 1-alpha-3 coming-to. Speed now 100 kph, altitude approaching five hundred feet, over."

"Copy 1-alpha-3, Starfleet engaging tractor beam..."

The sleek, private shuttle vibrated softly as an unseen tractor beam ensconced the vessel.

“TPD 1-alpha-3, cut your engines and set controls to neutral. We have you. Sit-back and welcome to Starfleet Headquarters.”

“Roger Starfleet, 1-alpha-3 complies.” The pilot powered-down the primary thrusters and set the guidance avionics to neutral.

The slick red shuttle was gently pulled towards Starfleet Command’s main building. A pair of Academy cadets jogging along the Presidio paused to marvel at the glorious little red craft. All TPD executive vehicles were painted a brilliant red.

## **BOLIAN BREW**

Henry stood silently watching the sleek red shuttle arrive on one of the smaller platforms below the familiar Bolian Café on the second concourse of the Command Building's primary hanger. Once Hibiki's shuttle came to a rest on pad 3B below, Admiral Wallace headed back to his shaded seat at the head of the long, empty table. Commander Dazgin, dressed immaculately in a freshly pressed maroon tunic stood patiently at the café's entrance, flanked by two security men.

The Bolian barista who'd operated the café for years, was busily plating an assortment of pastries in the kitchen. The private engagement the Starfleet Commander-in-Chief had specifically reserved the little coffee shop for was due to begin in forty-five minutes.

"Mr. Masaru, it's good to see you again, sir." Commander Dazgin offered Hibiki a graceful bow, remembering to keep his eyes fixed on the old human's own as he bent forward, so as not to offend.

"Thank-you, Commander. Have we arrived, early?" Hibiki returned the gracious bow to the fit young Benzite.

"The others will be arriving within the hour, sir. Admiral Wallace was hoping to have some time with you ahead of the meeting." Dazgin swept his arms towards the large table within. Half of the table was obscured by shadows cast from an overhead canopy.

Hibiki narrowed his eyes and squinted. The café's seating area sat behind rich brown Bocote wood stanchions and golden English Oak panels which defined the café's perimeter. At the edge of the second level concourse a long bar had been mounted to the interior side of these wooden barricades and a row of tall stools had been arranged to allow patrons a view

down to the primary landing platforms below. There wasn't a soul to be seen anywhere...

Henry had just taken his seat at the head of the long table and realized that Hibiki couldn't see him sitting in the shadow of the café's covered service counter, kitchen, and operating plant. He rose slowly from where he'd just settled and waved at his old friend from the shadows.

"I'm sorry sir, your assistant..." Dazgin stepped between Ryuji and the café's entrance.

"It's alright, Commander Dazgin. Mr. Masaru's assistant can wait at the bar while we talk." Henry, dressed in a black jumper, emerged from the under the canopy and waved Hibiki and Ryuji in.

## REUNION

“Henry, it is good to see you again. It must be close to, what? Two years ago, now?” Hibiki Masaru stepped under the café’s shady canopy and warmly shook his old friend’s hand. Henry’s beard was new...and puzzling.

“Three years ago, this Christmas coming. Please, Hibiki, sit. Thank-you for coming early. I wanted some time to speak with you privately.” Admiral Wallace watched as the older man slowly seated himself at the end of the large table.

Hibiki was dressed in a white silk robe held closed by a broad red sash over cream-coloured overalls. Even in the shadows the small man seemed to glow. Henry, on the other hand, dissolved into the darkness and appeared as little more than a disembodied head.

“Forgive me, Henry, but this seems very odd to me. These Bureau meetings are usually handled over subspace...”

“I wanted to have everyone here, face-to-face. This will be my last Design Bureau meeting, Hibiki.” Henry looked past his friend towards the far end of the café where the young man Masaru had brought along sat at the tall counter. He was quietly looking down at the landing platforms.

“Oh? Unless they’ve decided to make you President, I’d have thought you’d reached the pinnacle of your career, my friend. What new opportunities are they sending you towards now?”

“As of 1500 hours tomorrow Hibiki, I will be retired. I’m done.” Henry was surprised how odd it felt to say the words aloud.

“I see...”

“Admiral Sellers, who has been filling in as Chief of Operations since...since Xao was charged and taken into custody, will be named Commander-in-Chief. George Pept has been promoted to Admiral and has been selected to head Ops.”

Hibiki sat quietly, studying his friend's tired, weathered face. It was odd enough seeing Henry out of uniform during the business day; the thick black and grey beard his friend had apparently let grow since last they met was more than curious, it was jarring.

“It's time, Hibiki.” Henry tried to read his friend's expression but was at a loss. He glanced over to Dazgin at the guarded entrance to the small café. The Benzite was inspecting his security men. The others would arrive in short order.

## HOUSEKEEPING

“So, you have been too busy to share such grand news with your friends?” Hibiki tried to remain calm, but the sudden news of his friend’s impending life-change had stirred something within.

“I apologize, sincerely. Just...the Romulan Treaty, the election, the business with the Cardassians...” Henry stopped himself and drew a quick breath. Anger flared. Hibiki didn’t have clearance to know about...

“What about the Cardassians?” Hibiki probed with a concerned tone.

*Damn it*, thought Henry. “I shouldn’t have said anything about that, we’ll disregard it, please?”

“So...no talk about the Cardassians. Perhaps you wish to discuss the Romulan flag ship that was spotted over Algeron, then? We received the Starfleet sensor data; I believe you were furnished with our limited findings on the vessel?”

Henry nodded. He’d seen the reports. All the major Fleet contractors were asked to analyse the fleeting data the *Enterprise* sensors had captured during the seventeen seconds the Romulan Praetor’s flag ship was visible for all to see in orbit around Algeron. It was a massive new Warbird design that put even the late *Tomed* to shame. Speculations about the vessel’s capabilities ran wild. All that was known for sure was that this new class of Warbird was bigger than anything the Romulans had been known to have created before and its cloaking technology was much improved from earlier known examples. She was called *Vejul*. Aside from that, she was a mystery.

“I want to apologize for not finding the time to come and see you as a friend should have, Masaru-San. I wanted to talk to you about so much...I’d

hoped to see you at the launch of the *Nogura*, but T'Chou's trial had me sequestered."

Hibiki thought back to seven months earlier, when Admiral Sellers had joined him at the ceremony launching TPD's first *Excelsior*-class starship. She'd been more than five months delayed, but she'd been sent out into the galaxy to great fanfare.

"Admiral T'Chou was a disgraceful stain upon all of us, my friend." Hibiki offered.

"T'Chou was a murderer and an appalling opportunist. He'll spend the rest of his life at Ardana Minor's penal colony. That's not why I'm here though. We're meeting in person today to do some housekeeping, maybe make things better."

## THE END OF MONOPOLIES

Hibiki reflected that Henry Wallace was nearly twenty years younger than himself. Yet here he was a remarkably accomplished man declaring an end to a career of service and honour. The notion of walking away while still being perfectly capable of contributing to and shaping the future was difficult for Hibiki Masaru to reconcile within himself. He sat quietly for a moment.

His eyes had adjusted to the shaded atmosphere beneath the café's heavy canopy. Henry's broad shoulders were rounded, and he'd put on weight since the Christmas he and his daughter had spent with Hibiki and his family in Toronto almost three years earlier. The beard was completely out of keeping with the neat and trim professional man he knew Henry to be, but what was most telling here, in the darkness, were the dark, lifeless eyes Henry now met the world with.

"You've lost much, my friend. Perhaps too much."

Henry cleared his throat and offered Masaru a wan smile. "The new President and the in-coming C-in-C need the Starfleet Design Bureau to function as a single entity, Hibiki. That's what we're all going to talk about today."

Hibiki sat back in his seat and carefully folded his hands in his lap. "I see. Are we not functioning adequately now?"

Henry sighed. The others would be easy to cow, but Hibiki had spent a lifetime competing with the Teague Legacy. Now, after finally reaching the top of the mountain, he might not be content with simply being a cog in the overall machine.

"The *Vejul*...it shook things up. We've got a Treaty, but clearly, we've underestimated the Romulans."

There were other considerations too. The Cardassians were up to something, somehow funding an increasingly hostile expansion of their empire just beyond Federation borders. Of course, the highly classified concerns around the *Borg* had been greatly stoked and the continuing drama with the wounded Klingon Empire all cried out for Starfleet's need to be prepared for just about anything.

"The *Upgrade* was only partially successful if truth be told. We can't go on fragmented and tied to the old ways of doing things. We're too slow in responding."

Henry passed Hibiki one of the PADDs from the case he'd set down on the floor beside his chair at the head of the table. He waited while his friend read the preamble loaded onto each of the PADDs which had been prepared for today's meeting.

## QUIET INDIGNATION

Hibiki gently lay the PADD atop the table and grit his teeth. There was no grace in betraying fury.

Henry watched his friend stoically absorb the simple, legally binding preamble the Federation Council had had drafted ahead of today's quarterly meeting of the Starfleet Design Bureau. All eighteen civilian firms were expected to read and sign-on to the new SDB standards. Since the unsolved disappearance of Dannar Teague, the genius powerhouse behind Starfleet's most prolific contractor, the Newport News Engineering and Design Consortium, Masaru and TPD had run the table. Things had to change. All the independents would pool their resources and act as one under the auspices of the Starfleet Corps of Engineers.

"Hibiki, going forward, this is how it must be. The old way of doing things is over. The President, moreover, the Federation Council is demanding that the Design Bureau function as an actual, dedicated organization. Not a loose affiliation of independents."

"Mmmm...This proposal, seems, oddly timed." Hibiki kept his tone measured, but he was deeply offended.

"It's been coming for a long time, Hibiki. I'd be grateful if you could see the wisdom in this and be a leader for the others."

"Was Teague a leader, Henry? I don't recall the Council moving to unseat the great Dannar Teague from the San Francisco Shipyards."

Henry bowed his head and sighed. Teague was gone and Newport News now operated under TPD's control. For years Masaru had pushed to access the Newport weapons and support tech developed at the Martian Tactical Institute to win some of the more prestigious Fleet contracts and

prove he was every part Dannar's equal. Dannar self-destructed and now, just when Hibiki had everything he'd ever wanted, he was being asked to give it all away.

“Dannar was genius. An incredible, stubborn, unstable genius...but he was no leader. He's also gone. After all this time, I don't think he's coming back.”

“If he did?”

“He'd be obliged to get onboard with this too.”

## ARRIVALS

“Yutani 423, this is Space Dock Control. We have you at outer marker Luna 7. Please confirm your flight plan and destination, over.”

Aboard the approaching Class IV shuttle, Givagror Kruxtou, the director of the Yutani Structural Group operating the yards at Rigel VII, was preparing her quarterly report for the meeting. The shipyards she was responsible for had sat vacant ever since the three latest *Miranda*-class starships Yutani had built under contract to Newport News had been delivered to Andoria. Her assistant advised that they were twenty minutes out from Starfleet Head Quarters on Earth.

“Space Dock, this is Yutani 423. We are making for Starfleet Command HQ to attend the quarterly meeting of the Starfleet Design Bureau by order of Admiral Wallace, Starfleet Commander-in-Chief. Four persons aboard. Two crew and YSG Director, Ms. Kruxtou and assistant. Copy?”

Razyiizat Woukap, Yutani’s chief pilot, kept his craft on course towards the bright blue Capital planet of the Federation. He’d dropped the shuttle to one-half impulse and held precisely to his filed flight plan. On the status board to the left of his controls a yellow light began to flash. Out of habit he double checked to make sure only the basic deflector screens were powered-up, so as not to interfere with the scanning beams.

“Confirmed Yutani 423, welcome to Earth. Proceed on cleared flight plan to sub-orbital approach Charlie-9-Tango. Reduce speed to one quarter impulse at McKinley Station and your glide path will deposit you on HQ’s doorstep, copy?”

“Copy Space Dock, Yutani 423 confirms.”

## FLEETING MOMENTS

Henry gave Masaru a few moments of silence to order his thoughts. He'd prepared PADDs for each of the expected representatives to read and sign, but he'd wait a few more minutes before spreading them around the empty table.

"Hibiki, this really is coming from the President and the Council. If you're going to do business with Starfleet, this is how its going to be."

"If I don't agree, what? You'll get somebody else to build my *Constellations*, hmm? Somebody else is going to build *Excelsiors*?" Hibiki balled his fist and took a breath.

Obviously, they'd get one of the others to build the ships. When Teague shuttered Newport News and disappeared hadn't Henry simply turned to TPD to continue the *Miranda* and *Excelsior* lines? Yutani was likely the only other company with infrastructure to immediately begin laying keels, but nature abhors a vacuum; the others would adapt.

"I'm running out of time, Hibiki. The others will be here soon. I'd like them to find you prepared to sit with me at the head of this table. If not, I respect that, but I'll have to ask you to leave." Henry wanted this to be over. The thought of ending his decades long friendship with Hibiki over this was appalling.

The terrestrial San Francisco Yards had been deemed obsolete during the *Upgrade*. McKinley Station had been earmarked as the primary Earth build site, which was now being operated by Masaru's people. The new home of Theoretical Propulsion Dynamics at Utopia Planetia was still primarily focused on specialized modular units for the growing *Constellation* fleet, but Starfleet had expansive plans for the infrastructure already in place

on Mars. The wheels had been set in motion long before Teague had disappeared.

“Who would be making the decisions, then? Who would...who would I be expected to answer too? If I were to agree to this reorganization?”

Henry ran his hand down his beard. “Provided all eighteen independents sign on? A new board will be formed with each of you having a voice. Commodore Stephen Langdon, the operational head of the Starfleet Corps of Engineers will co-chair the board alongside the primary civilian authority.”

“Primary civilian authority?”

“Logically, the board member with the most to offer. At the moment that would be you, Masaru-San.”

## MEETINGS & PARTINGS

The Bolian who ran the café emerged from the back kitchen with an enormous platter of pastries and scones which he carefully set down atop the serving counter. “Gentlemen, I’m sorry! Let me retract that canopy, I hope you haven’t been sitting in the dark too long!”

The slightly paunchy blue man scurried to a control panel behind his counter and held down a large green button. Slowly, the heavy canopy which had kept Henry and Hibiki’s end of the long table in the shade, began to retract. The light of the afternoon found the two friends.

Admiral Wallace rose from his seat and reached down to pull his case of PADDs up to the table. Hibiki Masaru also got up from his seat as the daylight bounced off his white silk robe. “Under this new Bureau, who decides which designs to pursue? Who would have creative control?”

Henry reached into his case and removed a half dozen PADDs. “The independents who presently operate under contract with Starfleet, we feel, represent the best in each of their fields. Projects will be put to tender in very much the same way as they always have been, only each new *contract* would be dissected by the board and the work divided amongst the relevant branches of the Bureau.”

“A unified collaborative, then?”

“Of a sort. The Bureau would work with Starfleet directly to shape whatever’s needed. Your own Research and Development efforts won’t be hindered by this, Hibiki. Can I count on you to help shepherd the others along, after I’m gone?”

Masaru turned and watched as his assistant rose from his own seat overlooking the landing platform. A bright yellow planetary transport was

arriving. Hibiki knew young Ryuji recognized the Tyrel Systems executive shuttle. A larger interplanetary shuttle dropped into a glide path behind the yellow transport. The Yutani Structural Group had arrived as well.

“Your assistant...is he being groomed to run things one day?” Henry asked as he began laying out PADDs.

“Ryuji? No. He’s a fine accountant, but no engineer. One day my granddaughter Sakura will take my place on this board. One day, but not now. Retirement is for old men.”

Henry smiled. He’d fade away, but maybe something good from his time might blossom to serve the Federation as it continued its trek into the long dark night ahead.

