

“Hi Dad.”

“Jimmi. I wasn’t expecting a call from you tonight.” McCoy said, his eyebrow raised in a gesture of mild surprise. “Is something wrong, Dear?”

“No Dad.” Jimmi said, smiling at him on the view screen. “I am fine. The baby is fine. I just called to tell you some good news.”

“My favorite kind.” McCoy said. “What is it?”

“I just finished talking to Professor Romano. You probably don’t remember, but he is the head of the history department at UCLA.” Jimmi said. “He offered me a job.”

“Really?” McCoy asked. Now his eyebrow was up as far as Jimmi had ever seen. “What about the Café?”

“It’s only part time. Two grad classes.” Jimmi explained. “One on World War II and on one the social changes brought on by the Information Revolution. I can do it on Earthlink. And all that research I did on the 20<sup>th</sup> century will really come in handy.”

“You sound excited by the prospect.” Her father said with a smile.

“If you promise not to say I told you so, I will admit that I have missed teaching.” Jimmi said. “Hikaru tells me I give lectures in the bar all the time.”

“All I will say is congratulations.” McCoy said. “And that it sounds like a wonderful opportunity.”

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Captain Sulu was not in a hurry. He strolled along in the general direction of Starbase Twelve’s transporter room. His attention was drawn by a young woman in uniform sitting on a bench on the edge of the park. Her duffle bag lay on the deck next to her. She was bent over, resting her head in her hands.

“Ensign” Sulu said stopping to stand in front of her. “Is there a problem?”

The young woman looked up at him. She was pale and her breathing was shallow. “Captain.” She said slowly. “I don’t feel well.”

“I see.” Sulu said. “Which ship are you reporting to?”

“Enterprise, Sir.”

“Then you are late, Ensign.” Sulu said. “Don’t you think you better report?”

“I don’t think I can, Sir.” She said.

“Yes, you can. Believe me, we all have.” Sulu said gently. Then he changed to a more commanding voice. “Now, stand up. Walk into the transporter room and apologize to Commander Chekov for being late.”

She stood up slowly and took a few deep breathes before shouldering her duffle bag. “Yes Sir.”

“I am sure the commander will send you to sick bay.” Sulu said. “But don’t expect much sympathy from Dr. McCoy.”

“Yes Sir.” She repeated before heading off towards the transporter room. Sulu watched her go. He gave her a couple of minutes to report before following her.

The transporter room was crowded with new ensigns reporting to Excelsior and Enterprise. There was barely room to move in the small room. One of the ensigns by the door noticed the captain and came to attention. All the others quickly followed suit. Sulu walked up to the transporter control station and the two senior officers there.

“Good morning Commander Chekov.” Sulu said. “You disappeared early last night.”  
“I did not want to stand my watch with a hang over this morning, Captain.” Chekov said with a grin.

“Right.” Sulu returned the grin. He knew exactly why Chekov had left the poker game and the Café early. “I take it that is your story, and you are sticking to it.”

Chekov just laughed and said, “Yes Sir.”

Sulu turned to the woman with the computer padd in her hand, “Good morning Lt. Gonzoles.”

“Good morning, Captain.” Gonzoles said. Before he could ask her, she added, “All present and accounted for.”

“Good.” Sulu said. He walked past the ensigns still standing at attention to the transporter pad. He glanced at the young woman he had just spoken to. She also stood at attention. “Put them to work, Lieutenant. Excelsior please, Chief.”

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“Captain Sulu.” A short humanoid man called his attention as he walked through the park of Star Base 12.

“Ambassador Asthta.” Captain Sulu said, smiling down at the Rigilian man. He was no more than 5 foot tall and the little bit of hair that ringed his mostly bald head had faded from brown to gray since Sulu had first met him almost 10 years earlier. “It is good to see you again.”

“May I present Ambassador Kurrdar.” Asthta nodded to the Klingon man who had stopped in the park as well. He was taller than Sulu by more than half a foot. His dark brown hair hung loosely well below his shoulders.

“Captain Sulu.” Kurrdar nodded his head slightly.

“Ambassador.” Sulu returned.

Before anyone could say anything more, six thirteen year old Human boys ran through the park. They shoved each other, calling loudly back and forth as they ran. Sulu watched his son’s best friend, Aldo, jump on Harry and knock him off his feet. The two boys rolled towards the adults. Sulu stopped them with his foot on Harry’s back as they almost rolled into him. The other four boys stopped just short of the adults.

“Harry, Aldo.” Sulu said. The two boys looked up at him and grinned. “Take this nonsense somewhere safe. The gym or the holosuite.”

“The holosuite has a new program.” Aldo said. He pushed away from Harry and stood up. “It’s called Gladiators!”

“Sounds like fun.” Sulu said. “Go.”

Harry stood up next to his friend. “Mom says we spend too much time there.”

“I’ll square it with your mother.” Sulu said. “Go ahead.”

Harry and Aldo grinned at each other. As if on cue, the boys turned back to Sulu and said together, “We who about to die, salute you.” They turned and ran in the other direction, still pushing at and calling to each other.

“Gladiators?” Ambassador Kurrdar asked.

“From ancient Earth, gladiators were slaves who fought to the death in personal combat for the amusement of their owners.” Sulu explained. He smiled and added, “The boys have a lot of energy.”

“It would seem that boys of this age are alike in many species.” Kurrdar said. “I was

unaware that Terrans ever owned slaves.”

“Centuries ago, I believe.” Ambassador Asthta said. Sulu nodded.

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Jimmi sat on a chair on the edge of the Fly by Night’s small dance floor. Her eyes were closed as she strummed the guitar and sang the slow love song. There were only a few people in the bar and she was singing as much for herself as anyone else.

She did not see her husband come into the bar. The song was one of his favorites. He sat on the bar stool closest to her as she sang.

When she finished he applauded with the rest of the small crowd. Jimmi looked up and smiled. She put the guitar down and walked into his arms.

Hikaru spoke to his wife softly in Japanese. She only understood part of the sentence. He had told her she looked sexy, that she understood, but the phrase at the end contained words she did not recognize. She repeated the phrase softly.

“Eyes closed.” Hikaru explained. In standard, he whispered to her “You looked so sexy strumming your guitar and singing with your eyes closed.”

Jimmi smiled and kissed him deeply. Then she asked. “How long?”

“Tonight.” He said. “We’ll be on our way in the morning.”

“You granted liberty?” Jimmi asked. He nodded. She stepped back from him and quickly went behind the bar. Hikaru sighed. He would have just once liked her all to himself. But she was behind the bar, checking stocks and glassware. She stopped long enough to call the rest of her staff to work. He sat down on a bar stool and watched her. She brought him a beer. “You know how it is. A ship comes in....”

“And everyone goes to work.” Sulu said. He took a drink of his beer. “I know.”

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“Do you think,” Sulu started slowly. “That it is possible to have a command career and a family?”

“As in marriage?” Uhura asked. Sulu nodded. “Well, Commodore Decker did it.”

“Now there’s a bright and shining example.” Sulu laughed. “The man was a basket case.”

“After he lost his crew, yes. But look at his record. He was a great command officer.” Uhura said. “What about Commodore Stone?”

“He left his ship to take command of a Starbase.” Sulu shook his head. “Not what I had in mind.”

“Then let’s forget other examples.” Uhura said as they strolled along together. “What you are really trying to decide is, can Hikaru Sulu in all his arrogance do it better than any of these others.”

Sulu laughed at his good friend. “Yes, I guess that is what I am trying to decide.”

“My dear Boy,” Uhura laughed as well. “No one can answer that question but you.”

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