

Ensign Mirek finished walking the perimeter and returned to the base camp. She put her phaser back on her belt and set her tricorder to detect motion before she sat down by the heated rocks. "It seems to be all clear, Captain."

"You don't sound too sure, Ensign." Sulu noted from across the campfire.

"There is nothing on the tricorder, Sir." Mirek clarified. The glow of the heated rocks lent an eerie light to the faces around it. Ellen Mirek did not like open spaces especially at night. "But I can't help feeling I am being watched."

"I know what you mean." Lt. Gonzoles nodded and handed her a cup of warm liquid.

"Thank you, Lieutenant." Mirek smiled as she accepted the emergency ration. She had not been on board *Excelsior* long and still not sure what to expect from the senior officers. Captain Sulu stretched out next to the campfire and put his hands behind his head. He stared up at the stars. It was a clear night and the black canopy was dotted with distant stars. "How long will the night be on this planet, Ensign?"

"We can expect about eleven hours of darkness, Captain." Mirek reported. "The temperature should stay within the comfortable range."

"Where'd you grow up, Mirek?" Gonzoles asked.

"New Brazil Colony, Sir." Mirek answered.

"So you think comfortable is anything above freezing." Gonzoles laughed. "I grew up near Earth's equator. It already seems chilly to me."

"Really?" Mirek's voice was full of surprise.

"Yes." Gonzoles nodded and held her cup up so that the steam warmed her face. "Yaz says there is good skiing at New Brazil. Year round."

Captain Sulu laughed softly to himself. The two women officers looked at him then at each other. "All right, Gonzo. I've got to know. How did Yaz come up with that particular nickname."

"It was when I first met him." Gonzoles explained. "Before I understood it was impossible to have a serious conversation with Yaz about anything other than work."

"Noted." Sulu laughed. "Go on."

"He asked if I was any relation to Maria Gonzales."

Captain Sulu laughed, then asked. "What did you say?"

"I pointed out that our names were spelled differently. Mine being G-O-N-Z-O-L-E-S with emphasis on the second O." Gonzoles said. "Hence Gonzo."

Ensign Mirek didn't see what was so funny. But Captain Sulu, Lt. Gonzoles, and Lt. Yazdani all evidently knew who the woman was. She didn't like feeling stupid, so she asked. "Who is Maria Gonzales?"

"A notorious madam of Mexico City in the early twenty first century." Gonzoles said. "There are claims that the original Treaty of the Americas was worked out at her infamous establishment." Sulu said. "I am surprised you did not know, Mirek."

Captain Sulu was looking at the stars again and did not see the brief expression of concern on Mirek's face. But Lt. Gonzoles did. "Captain." Gonzoles said. "Not everyone is married to a history professor."

Surprised, Sulu turned to look at Gonzoles. Rosita looked at him with one raised eyebrow. Captain Sulu laid back and looked at the stars. Neither woman could see the hint of a smile on his face. "Of course. Sometimes I forget."

“What instrument is that?” The Andorian asked.
“Harmonic guitar.” Jimmi said. “I’ve been playing since I was fifteen years old.”
“It has a nice sound.” The Andorian said. “Strong and rhythmic one minute, sweet and sensual the next. You play well.”
“Thank you.”

“I knew he wasn’t Human.” Jimmi shrugged. “Or at least he wasn’t from Earth.”
“How?” Her husband asked. “Herlans are very close to Humans physically.”
“He did not recognize basic Human expressions.” Jimmi said.
“Such as?”
“I asked him if he wanted his whiskey on the rocks.” Jimmi said. “He did not know what I meant.”
Hikaru laughed. “The bartender method.”
“Exactly.” Jimmi laughed too. “Are you laughing at me?”
“Never.”

“Dad.” Twelve year old Demora Sulu said as she walked into the transporter room. She had seen him go in and had run to catch up to him. He was talking to Lt. Briscoe while eight newly commissioned officers stood at attention in the small room. Her best friend, Maddie, had followed her into the transporter room. Demora held out the tiny gray and white kitten to him. It was only a couple of weeks old, nothing more than a ball of fluff. “Look! Maddie’s cat had kittens.”

“I see, Dee.” Sulu said. He smiled at her friend. “Good morning, Maddie.”
“Good morning Captain Sulu.” Maddie replied. She carried two tiny gray kittens.
“Can I keep him?” Dee asked.
“Not my department.” Sulu said. “Ask your mother.”
“But if you said yes, Mom would have-“ Demora started
Her father cut her off. “It is entirely up to your mother.”
“But Daddy, he is so cute.” Dee tried again.
“Did you hear me, Little Girl?” Sulu asked.

Demora stopped and looked at her father. He was not amused. She sighed and reluctantly said, “Yes Sir.” She nodded to her girl friend to follow her out of the transporter room.

Just before they left the room, her father said. “If I was you Dee, I would ask her before the Café opened for business today.”

Dee brightened. She said “Thanks Dad.” And ran out of the room, giggling with her girl friend.

Sulu walked up the two steps to the transporter pad. “Carry on, Briscoe. Excelsior

please, Chief.”

After the Captain had transported to Excelsior, the man behind the control board said. “It was a cute kitten.”

Briscoe nodded and laughed. The newly commissioned ensigns all relaxed.

Jimmi and Randy were behind the bar. Captain Sulu and Dr. Patrick sat next to each other in front of it. The Café was busy with Excelsior in port but it was nothing they could not handle. The dinner rush was in full swing. Diane picked up a tray from the bar with 3 plates of George’s special for the evening to deliver to table six. A jazz trio of Excelsior officers had claimed the stage.

Randy was sharing a joke across the bar with Gonzoles and Smith when a loud scream of pain followed by a stream of Spanish words came from the kitchen. Jimmi and Randy faced each other for a second before both ran for the kitchen. Randy got there first. George was still ranting in Spanish. He was holding his left hand in his right, blood was every where. On his apron, on the floor, on the food on the stove. Jimmi stopped in the doorway to the kitchen and watched Randy wrap his husband’s hand in a dish towel. She turned back to the bar and called Dr. Patrick.

Pat quickly got up and came around the bar followed closely by Sulu. “Let me see.” Pat ordered. By the time he had gotten to them, Randy had George sitting on a bar stool and Jimmi had the first aid kit open on the table next to him. Randy unwrapped the hand slightly for the doctor to see. Blood quickly filled George’s palm. Pat did a quick glance at the first aid kit and said. “I need my med kit.”

“Sulu to Excelsior.” The captain did not even wait for the reply from the ship. “I need an emergency med kit beamed to me immediately.”

“Aye Sir.” Mr. Kim said.

Less than a minute later the kit appeared. Randy held George’s arm steady as Dr. Patrick repaired the cut.

“What were you trying to do, George?” Pat asked with a smile as he worked. “Cut off your hand?”

George just shook his head, not able to come back with a snappy answer right at that moment. Randy had one hand on George’s back, rubbing gently in a circular motion. He did manage to ask, “Just how many drinks have you had tonight, Doc?”

“Not enough for you to worry about.” Pat said.

Jimmi took a deep breath and let it out. Jokes were always a good sign in an emergency. She picked up the bloody knife from where it had fallen on the floor and tossed it in the sink. She checked the stove and the list of orders to make sure nothing was burning.

Stopping at the kitchen computer terminal, she said “I am changing the menu.”

“To something that does not require a big knife?” Hikaru asked.

Everyone in the kitchen laughed. Jimmi explained, “I am changing it from George’s menu to mine.”

“I did not know you had your own menu.” Her husband said.

“I am no master chef,” Jimmi said. “But George has taught me enough dishes that I can

fill in when he's not here."

"I'm here, Boss." George said.

"Not for long." Jimmi said over her shoulder, to her husband she finished. "So when I am cooking, there is a smaller menu."

"I think I should have had dinner earlier." Sulu said with a grin for his wife.

"You will eat whatever I give you, Mister." Jimmi said

"Yes Ma'am."

Jimmi laughed and turned back towards the doctor and his patient. "Well Pat?"

"He'll live." Pat said and closed the med kit. "He'll even cook again. But not tonight. Wiggle your fingers for me, George."

George gingerly moved his fingers. "Hurts a bit to move them."

"Understandable." Pat nodded. "Give it a day or two and you won't have any problems. If there is still pain in the morning, see your doctor."

"Thanks Pat." Randy smiled and offered the doctor his hand. While they shook, Randy added. "Your drinks are on me tonight."

"Sounds good to me." Pat said and headed back to the bar.

"Randy, take George home and tuck him in." Jimmi said with a wink to George.

"Boss," Randy said. "If you are cooking, you are going to need me behind the bar."

"It's the Excelsior crew. They will wait. I have pull." Jimmi said. Sulu chuckled and left the kitchen. Jimmi turned back to Randy and George. "I'm serious guys. Go home. Take your time, Randy."

"Ok Boss." Randy said and started to usher George out of the kitchen

"The order for table 3 was ruined, Boss." George said as they headed for the back door of the kitchen. "You'll have to start over."

"No problem." Jimmi said as she followed them.

"The sauce for the Rigillian gray fish needs to simmer another 10 minutes." George added. "And don't let the vegetables grill too long. Remember last time."

"George!" Jimmi said as she stopped just inside the door. George and Randy stopped in the hall that led behind the Café. "Don't worry about it. If I have any real problems, I can always replicate what I need."

"Boss!" George stopped and stared at her in disbelief.

"Kidding." Jimmi laughed. "Just kidding. Go home and don't worry about it. Call me tomorrow."

Jimmi turned back to the kitchen. It was a mess. She went out to the bar and called the 2 bus boys that were working. One was her oldest son, Harry. The other was a seventeen year old boy named Jochim. He was the son of one of the engineers stationed on the base. He was taller than Harry with blond hair. His eyes were a bright pale green that suggested that his heritage was not entirely human.

She took both boys into the kitchen. "I need this kitchen cleaned up, guys. Put all the dishes in the sterilizer. Be especially careful of the bloody knife. I am going to do refills at the bar then get back in here and catch up on orders. Harry, I am going to need you to bus all the tables. If you have any problems tell Diane. Jochim, I am going to need you to help me with some prep work in here. When Randy gets back things will get back to normal."

"Ok Boss." Jochim and Harry said almost at the same time.

“Christine!” Dr. Tim Patrick called across the park of Star base 12.

Dr. Christine Chapel stopped and turned around. She smiled as the tall lanky doctor walked up to her. “Pat! It is so good to see you.”

He took her in his arms and kissed her. She returned the warm welcome with equal passion. He smiled and said. “I have been looking forward to this since the last time I watched you fade into the transporter beam.”

“You are such a romantic.” Christine smiled.

“I booked us a suite at the CTQ” Pat said with a grin.

“Really?”

“I did not want to take you on Excelsior and have Hikaru or Pavel take up any of *my* time with you.” Pat said and turned them towards the Civilian Temporary Quarters, which were one deck up and looked out over the open area of the park and play ground.

“With both their wives on the base, I doubt that would happen” Christine laughed that delightfully carefree laugh that had first caught Pat’s attention. With a sideways glance at him, she teased, “Perhaps you are ashamed of me and just want to keep this relationship a secret.”

“I doubt if it is much of a secret since I have already had champagne and strawberries sent there from the Café.” Pat laughed.

“As I understand it, George can keep a secret.” Christine said. “But Randy is another story.”

When Captain Sulu walked into his cabin, his wife was sitting in bed reading. She looked up at him and smiled. “Every thing ok on the bridge?”

“Sure.” He said as he hung his uniform jacket in the closet. “Kids sleeping?”

“Yep.”

“What are you reading?” He asked as he undressed.

“Murder mystery.” She said. “It’s set on space station New Freedom and it is quite racy.”

“Really?” Hikaru asked with a grin as he joined her in bed. “Tell me some of the racy parts.”
