

The long-range transport full of Starfleet personnel returning from leave had been in flight for over two hours. Sulu's headache had lessened to a dull thud. Chekov sat next to him. His chair was in the reclined position and his eyes were closed. Sulu's chair was partially reclined. He had never liked sleeping on these long trips. If not for the headache, he would have been listening to music to pass the time.

Chekov opened his eyes and looked over at his friend. He asked, "You had to pick the biggest one?"

"It wasn't his size that was the problem." Sulu had to laugh. "I just didn't realize how many friends he had in the bar."

"He did seem to be popular." Chekov agreed with a laugh.

"You have to admit, it was an adrenaline rush." Sulu grinned at his friend. "To just let go. No repercussions, no command decisions. Pure physical aggression."

"Oh yes." Pavel said, "I love being picked up and thrown across a room like that."

Sulu laughed out loud. "You made him pay for that."

Chekov grinned when he said, "Damn right, I did."

"Heard about Bartell?" Maryann asked just before taking a sip of her drink. They were relaxing on the wide comfortable couch in her bedroom on Space Station New Freedom. The pattern of the fabric was stripes of different widths in orange, brown and gold. He was stretched out on one end with his head resting on the arm of the couch. She was on the other end, curled up at his feet. It was an over sized piece that suited them so well that they made love here just as often as on the bed.

"What about him?" Matthew asked lazily. They had recently finished a wonderful meal and shared a bottle of wine. He was ready for a nap.

"Twenty years."

Looking up, Matthew Brady watched the changing pattern of muted colors that moved across the ceiling panels. "Ok."

"Ok?" She asked. "That's it?"

He shifted so he could look directly at her and asked, "What do you want me to say?"

"I don't know." Maryann said. "But if it wasn't for you, he never would have been caught."

"He had made it clear." Matthew shrugged and looked back at the ceiling. "It was him or me."

"Leaving him on that desolate little planet was not your only choice." Maryann put her wine glass on the table and stretched her legs out next to his. Her foot came almost to his chest.

Matthew shrugged again. "It's not like I left him to die."

"No, you let Star Fleet know exactly where he was and gave them the information they needed to hang him." She said.

"You did not complain at the time." Matthew noted. She did not have an answer to that. She just stared at the ceiling for a few minutes, thinking.

Matthew closed his eyes. He was just starting to drift off to sleep when Maryann said, "I

just wonder if you would do that to me.”

Matthew lifted his head to look at her and smiled, “Sweetie, I doubt that you would ever put us in the position where we would have to find out.”

Maryann sat up suddenly and said, “Wrong answer, Matthew Brady. Get out.”

“What?”

“You heard me.” She said and planted her feet against him. She pushed with all her strength. “Out! You are not sleeping here tonight.”

He rolled off the couch landing on his hands and knees. “You’re kidding!”

“No, I’m not.” Maryann said as she stood up. He stood up too. “I want you out. I want you out now!”

“Ok, ok.” He said and picked up his shoes. “I’m gone.”

“Hey Boss.” George called as she came into the kitchen. “You got a package.”

“A package?” Jimmi asked. A small box sat on the kitchen table. It has a sensor on the top. She placed her hand, palm down on the sensor. Next to her hand, the top of the box shimmered to reveal a small screen. Hikaru’s face appeared.

He smiled and said. “I can’t tell you about the mission. It’s all classified. But this is authentic. I thought you would like it.”

George looked over her shoulder as she opened the box. Very carefully she lifted the bundled paper. When she opened it up, it said “San Francisco Chronicle”

“What is it?” George asked.

“A newspaper.” Jimmi said slowly as she looked it over carefully. “From 1986.”

“Wonder how he got an old newspaper.” George said and went back to his pots on the stove.

“Don’t know.” Jimmi said as she skimmed over the news items on the first page. She stopped reading and said to George, “When I was in grad school, I did an internship helping go through a stockpile of 20th century papers. But those papers had been stored in some guy’s vault for hundreds of years. This feels new.”

“Feels new?” George asked.

“It’s not crumbling in my hands.” Jimmi explained and opened the paper up to a random page. An ad caught her eye. “Aw, there was a street festival. Music, crafts, food, drinks. Bring the whole family.”

“And we missed it.” George laughed.

“I’ll be in my office.” Jimmi called over her shoulder as she left the kitchen, still reading as she went.

Captain Sulu checked his mail. He played the file marked personal from Enterprise immediately. Commander Uhura’s face appeared on his screen. She smiled and said, “So now that you are a captain; you are too good to talk to the little people? I’m working first shift. Call me.”

Sulu checked the time. It was well into second shift. He placed the call from Excelsior to Enterprise and was put right through to Uhura. He leaned back in his desk chair and relaxed.

He smiled at her and said, "Hey."

"Hey." She responded. When he didn't say anything else, she said "Come on, tell me everything!"

"We haven't even left Spacedock yet." Sulu laughed. "There is not much to tell."

"Right."

"I am spending all day playing catch up." He said. He could not stop smiling. "Getting to know the ship. The crew. There is so much to know."

"I'll bet."

"The ship is huge. The computers are state of the art." Sulu said. "But you already know all this. I hear you keep in touch with Janice Rand."

"Well, you have to keep your networks open." Uhura laughed. "I hear your crew is itching to get out of the solar system."

"There have been a lot of trials." Sulu said. "And it would be nice if I knew my way around before we went anywhere, but I can't wait to see what she can really do either."

"I'm sure." Uhura said and then abruptly changed the subject. "So, what about Jimmi?"

"What about her?"

"How did she feel about you leaving right after the wedding like that?"

Sulu took a deep breath and said what he hoped to be true. "She understood."

"Ok."

"You don't think she understood?"

"I am sure she did." Uhura shrugged. "But that doesn't tell me how she felt."

"Well, maybe you should ask her." Sulu said and for the first time in their conversation, looked away from the computer screen. This was not the conversation he had intended when he called Enterprise.

"Hikaru?"

"What?"

"You sound, I don't know." Uhura said slowly as she searched for the right word. "Miffed at her."

"Miffed?"

"Annoyed, angry." Uhura grinned at him. "You know, miffed."

"I know what it means." He said. "But you are reading your signals all wrong."

"Right." Uhura nodded.

"What?"

"Who do you think you are talking to here?" Uhura asked. He just shrugged. "Just let me know when you are over this denial stage and we can actually talk about it."

Hikaru laughed out loud. She had always been the one he had talked to about his confusing feelings towards Jimmi. That she recognized that he was not thrilled with his own feelings on the whole wedding situation should not have surprised him. But it did anyway.

"Ok, ok. So I am not so happy that she did not tell me about the baby."

"Not so happy?" Uhura just nodded as if she was going to accept that answer.

"Well, don't you think she should have told me?" He demanded. "Didn't I have the right to such basic information that effects my life and my decisions?"

"Of course." Uhura said. "And did you tell her that you were planning to throw your

career away when we took the Enterprise?"

"That's different." He said. He almost added that it was just business. But Uhura had never accepted that line from him before. He sighed and said, "I almost told her. That last time I talked to her I had to cut the conversation short to keep from telling her."

"Maybe she was going to tell you about the baby then."

Sulu shook his head negatively. "She was too worried about the father."

"There was a lot for her to worry about at the time." Uhura said. "And there you are, ready to risk everything ..."

"For her father!"

"Yes, but it would not have been any different if the doctor was not Jimmi's father. You would have done the same thing."

"That's true." He said, "But still, she should understand..."

"But she did not know." Uhura interrupted. "Hard to understand what you don't know."

"Isn't that where trust comes in?"

"You don't think she trusts you?"

"You weren't there when she was calling off the whole wedding, our whole lives together." He said. "She did not trust me to be there for her or for the baby."

Had they been together in her cabin on Enterprise, she would have hugged him. She knew how hard it was for him to admit that to her. She took a deep breath and slowed the conversation down. Uhura asked, "Don't you think it scares Jimmi that she can not control what risks you take?"

"I know it does."

"It was her fear talking. She never really wanted to call the wedding off." Uhura said. Sulu just shrugged. Uhura had not been in the room. How could she know? When he did not say anything else, Uhura asked, "Do you know what the difference is between you and Jimmi?"

Sulu could think of several answers to that question, but just smiled at his friend and asked, "What?"

"You are all about command decisions. Making the correct choices given the information you have." Uhura said. "Jimmi makes her decisions based on her feelings. So naturally the two of you are going to clash on some things."

"That seems like a rather simplified statement." Sulu said. After all, command decisions required him to take all factors into consideration and that included feelings. And he knew Jimmi to be an intelligent woman. She did not just disregard rational thought to go with her gut feelings.

"It is." Uhura laughed. "But I stand by it."

He sighed and said, "You make it sound like this marriage does not stand much of a chance."

"No, no, no, no, no. Not what I am saying at all." Uhura said. "I think the two of you are good for each other. I always have."

"So what are you saying?"

"That it's ok to be miffed at her even though you are happy that you are finally married and starting your family." Uhura said.

It always amazed Sulu that Uhura could read him so well. He smiled at her and said, "You make a pretty good marriage counselor."

"Hmm, maybe as my second career." She laughed and winked at him. "It's getting late, Captain. Call me again soon."

"Yes Ma'am." Sulu laughed and let the connection close.

"Well?" One newly commissioned ensign said to the other one sitting next to him at one of the larger tables in the No Ranks Café. Eight of them had been there together since dinner. They had been indulging themselves for the last three hours.

"Well what?" Seth asked.

"Isn't that Captain Sulu?" The first one asked Seth as he nodded toward the bar stool where the Captain sat.

"Yes."

"So go say hi to him." Another one at the table urged. "You said you know him, right?"

"It was over two years ago." Seth Kaufman said. "I was just a second year cadet on my first field assignment."

"So what you are saying then," Ensign Deanna Davis said. "Is that you don't really know him."

Seth looked at her. He had wanted to ask her out since the first day he saw her in Lt. Menga's hand to hand combat class. Someday he would have the nerve. "I'm saying that he is my captain now and after spending the last couple of hours swilling down trillion ale with you guys, this might not be the best time to go say hello."

"Chicken." Deanna said, but she was laughing.

Ensign Enko, who was Andorian, looked at the laughing humans. Some of them were making a noise similar to that associated with an Earth chicken. "What does a domesticated fowl have to do with it?"

Davis explained, "On some parts of Earth, to say someone is chicken is to say they are afraid. Usually of something that there is no need to fear."

Enko just nodded as if he understood. The old sayings of his world did not translate to Standard well. He assumed this was the same kind of thing. But Enko had known Kaufman since they started at the Academy. He turned to his friend, "Is it really that you think he will not remember you?"

Kaufman finished his Trillian ale very quickly and stood up. His friends cheered as Seth walked deliberately towards the bar. Kaufman hesitated. Fril Enko had been right. Seth did worry that Captain Sulu would not remember him.

Captain Sulu was laughing at a joke the bar tender had just told. Randy glanced at the ensign behind Sulu but the young man shook his head slightly.

"Excuse me, Captain."

Sulu turned to see the slightly inebriated ensign. He could also see the table of his friends not far behind him. It was obvious to the captain exactly what was going on at that table. Sulu looked him up and down then said, "Ensign Kaufman. Are you enjoying the Café?"

The young man's eyes widened in surprise. He forgot everything he had been about to say. He stuttered, "Yes Sir."

“Good.” Sulu said.

Jimmi walked up next to her husband. She smiled at the ensign and said, “Now comes the part where he tells you to be sure to show up bright eyed and bushy tailed tomorrow.”

Hikaru laughed and said, “I did not plan on saying anything about a bushy tail.”

“Right.” She laughed too. “Stop playing with the ensigns and come dance with me.”

“As you wish.” He said and got up. With a hand on Kaufman’s shoulder, he turned the young man around and said, “Enjoy your evening, Mr. Kaufman.”

Seth Kaufman walked slowly towards his friend’s table as the Captain followed his wife to the dance floor.