

C.J. sat at the bar sipping a tall glass of iced fruit juice. It was early in the evening and she was enjoying a break in the day since Pavel had one-year-old Peter at the playground in the park of Starbase 12. Captain Sulu sat down on the bar stool next to her.

“Evening C.J.”

“Hikaru.” She smiled. He had a 3 month old baby asleep in his arms. “You know it’s ok to put them in the crib once they fall asleep.”

“I have tried that, 3 times.” Sulu said. “And 3 times he has woken up. The noise in here doesn’t bother him, but put him down in a quiet room and he’s wide awake.”

Over the years, the shelves behind the bar at the No Ranks Cafe came to hold more than just liquor bottles and glassware. The staff from time to time added family pictures, mementoes, bits of artwork. Each item had a story to go with it. The latest addition was a ceramic bowl that Brian had made for George’s birthday. It was almost round and the five year old had used every color available to him to paint it. He had been very proud when George added it to the shelf behind the bar for all to see.

“Ok Boss.” One young Human ensign asked as he pointed to the metal item hanging on the wall behind the bar. “I’ve been here for the last 3 days, and I can’t figure out what that thing is.”

Jimmi smiled at the young man who had just graduated from Star Fleet Academy. “That is Captain Sulu’s monkey wrench.”

“Monkey wrench?” The Andorian ensign sitting next to him asked.

“I gave it to him a few years ago.” Jimmi said. “But he did not want it on his ship. I guess that had something to do with my threat to throw it into Excelsior’s warp drive.”

The ensigns laughed. Several were paying attention to the conversation with the bartender. Jimmi had found over the years that they always loved to hear stories about the senior officers. One asked. “Do you think that would do much damage to a warp drive?”

Jimmi lifted it off the hook on the wall and handed it to the engineering ensign. “What do you think?”

“Wow, it’s heavier than it looks.” He laughed. “Made of iron?”

Jimmi nodded. The group of ensigns that had gathered around passed it back and forth amongst themselves. Mike stopped next to Jimmi and said. “Tell them about the time you threw the other one into the conduit that runs under the Fly by Night on Starbase 18.”

“Shhh.” Jimmi laughed. “They never billed me for that, so I am trying to keep it quiet.”

The department head staff meeting had been routine. As it was breaking up, Chekov asked Sulu. “Have you checked your mail this morning?”

“Not yet.” Sulu said. “Why?”

“Cathy and Jimmi hosted a Halloween party for all the kids on the base.” Chekov

laughed. "The recording she sent was priceless."

Captain Sulu laughed. "I wonder what costume Brian finally decided on. That is all he has talked about for months."

"That is a big decision when you are seven." Chekov laughed too.

Captain Sulu walked up to the bar. Jimmi was getting payment from a couple of ensigns when he said, "Hello Beautiful."

"Captain Sulu." Jimmi grinned. "What would your wife say if she heard you talking like that?"

"She hears me say things like that all the time." Sulu laughed and shrugged. "I am under the impression she likes it."

"She does." Jimmi laughed.

"So, when are you going to be able to take a break and have dinner with me?"

Jimmi glanced over her shoulder at the kitchen and down the bar at the line of customers. She handed him one of his favorite beers and said, "Um, give me a few minutes."

"Evening Captain." Dr. Patrick said when he walked up to the bar next Sulu. He smiled at Jimmi as he sat down. "Hi Boss."

"Hi Pat." Jimmi returned the smile. "Your usual, Sweetie?"

"Sounds good." Pat nodded.

"Sweetie?" Hikaru asked Jimmi, raising one eyebrow. He turned to his CMO, "Sweetie?"

Jimmi shrugged and served the drink. Dr Patrick just laughed. After Jimmi had moved on, Pat grinned at his captain and asked, "Jealous?"

Sulu laughed and explained, "Pat, she calls our children sweetie."

"Ouch." Pat laughed.

C.J. and Pavel Chekov left their seats at the bar to dance. A newly commissioned Vulcan ensign had been sitting next to C.J. He was talking to a Human classmate when Jimmi came by to see if they needed a refill. The Vulcan man said, "I believe there is a malfunction in the universal translator."

Jimmi smiled at the young man and said, "I don't think so. I just have it set to ignore certain Earth languages."

The Human man sitting next to him said, "Which ones?"

"Just about all the major ones except Standard." Jimmi smiled. "I am sure there are some I have missed."

"May I ask why you would wish to restrict the flow of communication?" The Vulcan ensign asked.

"Everyone from Earth speaks Standard." Jimmi explained. "I find using other languages provides a level of privacy for those of us who are here in the bar a lot. The Chekovs, who were

sitting next to you a few minutes ago, use Russian. My husband and I use Japanese. My head bartender and his husband use Spanish.”

“Interesting.”

“What happens when someone overhears you that speaks Japanese?” The Human ensign asked her with a grin.

“Then he gets an earful.” Jimmi winked at him.

Lt. Commander Smith followed Lt. Mirek onto the turbo lift when it was time for their lunch break. It was a routine shift on Excelsior.

“Mirek, can I ask you a question?”

“Of course, Mr. Smith.” She smiled up at him. They often took their lunch break together. Since Rosita and Ellen had known each other for years, he would often go to her when Rosita confused him.

“You’ve been on Excelsior quite awhile now.” Smith said.

“Since I got out of the Academy. I can’t imagine working anywhere else.” Mirek said. The turbo lift door opened and they walked down the hall towards the officer’s mess. When Smith did not say anything else, Mirek asked, “So what did you want to ask?”

He did not answer until after they got their lunch and found a small table in the corner of the room. “I am not sure exactly how to put this.”

When he did not continue right away, Mirek said. “Ok.”

“You seem to be a really good team player.” Smith said. “That is something I have problems with.”

“Something you want to be better at?” She asked carefully. It wasn’t what she had been expecting.

“Yes.” He nodded. “But Does it come naturally for you? Or is it something you have learned?”

“A little bit of both.” Mirek shrugged. “Mr. Chekov is just a very easygoing boss. I felt like I fit here from the beginning.”

“And the Captain?”

“He took a little longer to get used to.” Mirek nodded. “But once I got over the fear of saying something extremely stupid to him, it was ok.”

Smith laughed. “I can’t imagine you saying anything extremely stupid, Ellen.”

She laughed as well, “Thank you, Tomas.”

The moon that orbited New Lima was class N. The atmosphere had almost enough oxygen to support human life, but not quite. A constant wind blew, carrying a fine dust of gneiss which interfered with the sensors on the ship. It was into the swirling mess that the three Starfleet officers materialized. They were wearing full environmental suits.

Lt. Tomi Zee opened his tricorder and scanned the immediate area. Commander Mirek looked around. The security officer, Crewman Mariant, had his phaser out and ready.

"I can't see a thing." Mirek said. "Are you getting anything Zee?"

"No Sir." Zee said. "No life signs at all."

"Any indication of a ship of any kind?" Mirek asked.

"I am not reading anything definite." Zee said. "But there is a vague reading of deca-indium 25 degrees south, 33 meters distant. So there is something processed over there."

"Vague reading?"

"Best I can do in these conditions, Commander." Zee shrugged.

"All right, let's check it out." Mirek said. "Lead the way, Zee."

Mirek followed Lt. Zee closely with Mariant right behind her. She did not want to lose visual contact. She was glad the gravity was less than they were used to on board ship. At least that was not working against them. The terrain was barren and lifeless to the naked eye. They made their way along the base of large rock outcropping.

"Commander." Zee stopped. "I am getting better readings now. There is a small ship, dead ahead. I am reading five life signs."

"Can you identify?"

"Cardassian."

"Are the reading better because we are closer?" Mirek asked. "Or has something else changed."

"Looks like this gneiss dust is causing interference." Zee studied his readings. "Short range readings are going to be more accurate."

"All right." Mirek nodded. "Let's say hello."

The three Starfleet officers walked along the base of the outcropping until they saw the small Cardassian ship. It was obviously a shuttle. The design was aerodynamically sound for low atmosphere travel. The landing had been rough. The ship was scarred and it had landed on uneven terrain, leaving the ship tilted slightly. To leave, the crew would have had to climb out the hatch.

"Are they all inside, L.T.?" Crewman Mariant asked. He visually scanned the area as they walked out into the open, keeping his phaser at the ready.

"In this storm?" Lt. Zee said. "Where would you be?"

"Good point." Mariant nodded. He looked to Mirek, "Now what? We knock?"

"Something like that." Mirek smiled and started towards the downed ship. "I am sure they are monitoring their surroundings."

The ship's exterior lights flashed as they approached. Mariant asked, "Proximity alert?"

Mirek shrugged. The only visible hatch to the ship was about three meters off the ground. There was no way she could reach the control panel. With the heel of her hand, she hit the hatch two times. They waited.

The hatch slid open. A Cardassian man stood in the doorway into the ship looking down at them. He looked very tall from the starfleet officers's perspective. He did not seem bothered by the hot wind blowing the crystallized rock. He wore a clear mask that covered his entire face but no other environmental protections.

"I am Lt. Commander Mirek from the Federation Starship Excelsior." Mirek said. "We

thought you could use some help.”

“I am Navod.” The Cardassian said. He jumped down to the ground between Mirek and Zee. Mariant kept his phaser targeted on Navod. “This is the help you offer?”

“Mr. Mariant is just following proper away team protocol.” Mirek explained. “We monitored your sudden landing on this moon. When there was no response to our hail, we came to investigate.”

“Communications are out.” Navod nodded. “We have experienced several system failures.”

“Do you have casualties?” Mirek asked. “Are you in need of medical assistance?”

“No.”

“Is your ship repairable?” Mirek asked. “I have engineers standing by.”

“No.” Navod said. “The only assistance you could offer would be to relay a message to Cardassian high command of our location.”

“Admiral Sulu has already done that.” Mirek said. “They told us the closest ship is 3 standard days away.”

“We will wait.” Novad said.

“Do you have emergency rations? Water?” Mirek asked. “If we can be of any assistance.”

“We do not require assistance.” Novad said.

Mirek held her communicator out to the Cardassian. He just looked at her. She said, “Just in case you need something before your ship arrives. We will be in the area.”

He took the communicator from her hand and turned back to his ship. He climbed up the side of the ship far enough to reach the control panel. The hatch slid open and he stepped in. The hatch closed as soon as he was through.

“He did not want to let us in his ship.” Mariant noted.

“If the circumstances were reversed,” Mirek said. “I would not have wanted to allow him access to a star fleet ship either. Signal the Excelsior that we are ready to return.”

“Aye.”

After getting out of the environmental suits, the away team reported to the conference room. Admiral Sulu, Commander Kim and Commander Yazdani waited for them.

“What did you find?”

“The Cardassian ship had made a rough landing.” Mirek reported. “We could read five life signs but only spoke to one member of the crew who identified himself only a Novad. He admitted to having experienced several system failures and was glad to hear that a Cardassian ship would be there in 3 days. He did not allow us access to his ship and said they had what they needed to wait.”

“Good.” Sulu nodded. “Anything else?”

“Only that I left them my communicator in case they needed assistance before their ship showed up.” Mirek said.

“He took it?” Kim asked, surprised.

Mirek nodded. Lt. Zee added, “He did not say a word, just took it and went back into his ship.”

“Interesting.” Admiral Sulu said. “Dismissed.”