

At oh eight hundred hours Sulu walked onto the bridge of the Enterprise and took his station at the helm. Uhura was at her station and Spock was at his. Chekov was just a minute behind Sulu. They all were busy with predeparture checks.

"You missed breakfast this morning." Chekov commented to Sulu. "Warp drive interface?"

"On line. Impulse power shows ready. I was busy." Sulu answered never taking his eyes off his board. Navigation and helm were so closely interfaced that the officers needed to know the other station's status. "Navigational computer?"

"On line. Aligned to standard galactic coordinate system, no deviation." Chekov reported. His fingers moved surely over the controls as he took each system through a preflight check.

"Report, Mr. Chekov." Spock said from the science station.

"All navigational systems show green, Mr. Spock." Chekov said.

"Helm is on line and answering." Sulu reported. "Thrusters at station keeping."

"Communications systems on line." Uhura reported. "All decks reporting ready for departure."

Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy came onto the bridge. Kirk took the center seat. McCoy stood next to him on the chair's starboard side.

"All cargo and passengers present and accounted for. All personnel have reported back from shore leave. All systems on line and available." Spock reported before Kirk even had a chance to ask.

"Commander Uhura, get me the dockmaster." Kirk ordered. In a few minutes they were clear of space dock and on their way to sector thirty two at warp two. It was a routine morning. There was certainly nothing new to encounter here in the heart of Federation space. By mid morning they had cleared the busiest shipping lanes around Earth and the Captain had ordered speed increased to warp four.

Lt. Commander Sulu and Lt. Chekov took their lunch break together as usual. The ship was crowded with the extra twenty-five Starfleet officers aboard. They would serve on the new starbase that Enterprise would reach in two or two and a half weeks. Every extra bunk was taken. A few officers were doubling up with Enterprise officers.

"So how's your new bunk mate?" Sulu asked Chekov.

"All right." Chekov shrugged. "His name is Lt. Walter Anderson. But all he can talk about is his baby daughter. He can't wait until they will let his wife and baby join him on the base."

"Well, that is the whole reason for taking a job on a starbase, isn't it?" Sulu suggested. "I can't imagine spending my whole career sitting in one spot."

"Never seeing any action." Chekov agreed. "We would be bored. But I bet the Princess would like it."

"You think so?" Sulu concentrated on his lunch.

"Yes, I think she'd love it." Chekov teased him carefully. Having known Sulu for years, he generally knew just how hard he could push. "And it has been my experience that Jimmi gets everything she wants."

"Not everything." Sulu said pointedly and changed the subject. "So what happened in London after I left?"

"Kyle disappeared with Jane right after you left. According to Mary, the whole night was set up by Jane." Chekov said. He saw his new bunkmate with a tray looking for a table. "Hey, Anderson. Join us."

"Thanks, Chekov." The tall young lieutenant with the neatly trimmed mustache said as he sat down.

"Mr. Anderson. Mr. Sulu." Chekov introduced them.

"Nice to meet you, Commander." Anderson said. He picked up his silver ware. "Don't let me interrupt."

"Mr. Anderson." Sulu nodded then continued questioning Chekov. "That's what happened to John. How about you? Sounds like you and Mary were getting a little close."

"We danced. We talked. I walked her home." Chekov shrugged, smiling. He would keep the details to himself. "But what about you? You and Candy left first."

"I saw the young lady to her house and I left." Sulu said simply.

"Then?" Chekov pushed.

"I returned to San Francisco." Sulu said looking at his meal.

"You did not! Thank you very much! After you asked me to get you out of there?" Chekov shook his head in disbelief. "Your girlfriend is probably angry at me now."

"Don't worry about it Pav." Sulu laughed. "She is not angry at either of us. I explained it all to her."

"That is where you were this morning. What time did you get back to the ship? Never mind. What I don't know, I can't testify to." Chekov shook his head again. Sulu just shrugged. "She is going to cost you. You know that, don't you? What do you think, Mr. Anderson?"

"I don't know, Mr. Chekov." He responded carefully since he had just met these men and they obviously knew each other very well. "I am not sure what are you talking about."

Chekov was about to launch into a tirade about the events of the evening, but he looked at his friend and realized he would not be amused. Chekov sighed and said "It does not matter. We won't be seeing her for quite awhile. You are sure she is not mad at me?"

"I'm sure." Sulu laughed. He was finished his lunch. "I'll see you back on the bridge. Nice to meet you Mr. Anderson."

"Mr. Sulu." Anderson said as Sulu left the table. He turned to Chekov. "What was that all about?"

"True love, Mr. Anderson." Chekov smiled.

"Why would Mr. Sulu's girlfriend be mad at you?" Anderson asked. "If you don't mind my asking."

"I don't mind. Of course Sulu is another story." Chekov said with a smile and a shrug. "She wanted him to have dinner with her family. He asked me to get him out of it. I provided an appropriate life or death excuse, then he goes back and spends the night with her."

"Why didn't he just decline the dinner invitation?" Mr. Anderson asked.

"I don't know." Chekov said. There was no need to go into Jimmi's parentage. "But I am sure I will hear a different version of the evening in the next letter I get from her."

Lt. Anderson decided against asking Lt. Chekov why he was getting letters from someone else's girlfriend. After all he was only going to be aboard this ship for two weeks. There was no point in getting involved in their gossip. It sounded like a complicated situation.

Sulu walked out of the dining hall to find Captain Kirk on his way in. He was with another officer. He was no taller than Kirk however he was squarely built with massive shoulders and a barrel chest. His short hair was very fair, almost white even though he could not have been more than thirty five.

"Sulu." Kirk said. "I'd like you to meet Commander Von Maltz. He'll be commanding Starbase 68. Commander, this is my senior helm officer Lt. Commander Sulu."

"Nice to meet you Commander Von Maltz." Sulu smiled. "Congratulations on your assignment."

"Thank you, Mr. Sulu." Von Maltz said cordially. "I understand you've graciously given up your quarters for me. I'm sorry to have put you out."

"No problem, Commander." Sulu said. "I'm bunking with a good friend. If you'll excuse me, I'm due back on the bridge."

The trip passed slowly and uneventfully. Sick bay became the unofficial home of the starbase crew. Even those who had quarters elsewhere spent some time here. Several of the ensigns kept a poker game running most of the time. There were a couple of musicians in the group who kept themselves and their mates entertained. They made use of Enterprise's ample recreational facilities but did their best to stay out of the working crew's way.

The Enterprise crew managed with only a slight change of routine. Dr. McCoy stayed away from sick bay except when he was needed. Officers who had gotten used to living alone were putting up with roommates again. It was tedious but not impossible.

Mr. Sulu walked into Uhura's quarters. She was in bed reading a book. They were about a week out of space dock. Sulu sat on the temporary bunk and took off his boots.

"You got mail." Uhura said without looking up from her book.

"Great." Sulu said. "Computer access correspondence file, Sulu."

"There is one letter in the correspondence file for Sulu, Lt. Commander." the computer informed him.

"Play letter."

"Hello Hikaru." Candy Smith smiled on his computer screen. "I just wanted to drop you a line and let you know I took your advice. I called Starfleet command and they happily sent an officer to talk to my kids. He was a lieutenant who had served on the Starship Lexington. A nice young man from Sweden. He had even my hard cases jumping out of their seats with questions. Thanks for the idea."

"Computer, save return address." Sulu directed the computer.

"Working." The computer acknowledged the order.

"Who was that?" Uhura smiled at him.

"Candy Smith." Sulu said. "I met her in London that night with Pavel and John. She's a teacher."

"And what did Jimmi have to say about her?" Uhura asked.

"It was an innocent evening. And who said I told Jimmi?" Sulu asked. He grabbed his

standard issue pajamas and headed off to the bathroom. He did not want to continue this conversation.

When they finally came into orbit around the empty starbase, everyone on the ship breathed a sigh of relief. The engineering crew went over in environmental suits to establish an atmosphere and artificial gravity. Once that was accomplished the unloading of cargo and personnel could begin.

The senior staff of the Enterprise was kept rather busy as they worked on getting Star Base 68 operational. Scotty had life support up and running. They had dispensed with the environmental suits but the systems were not stabilized yet. Temperatures varied widely across the station. Until the computer system was functioning they had to trace every power disruption manually. Sulu was coordinating the transfer of supplies and cargo. He had pulled Chekov off the bridge to help him. Between the ship and the base, they had fifty crew members moving cargo.

Spock was not about to admit to the irritation the malfunctioning computer system was causing him. It had been a major accomplishment just to get the internal comline functioning. They had managed with field communicators for the first eighteen hours they were there. Spock should have been able to activate the secondary computer from Enterprise, but had to send repairs crews to the station twice. Only Captain Kirk was bored. Coordinating manpower was not his favorite duty. Sulu and Chekov were in cargo bay three checking over the next load. They were using five shuttles and the cargo transporter in an attempt to speed up the process. Of course everyone on the base felt their supplies should be delivered first.

"Bridge to cargo bay three." Lt. Commander Uhura's voice called over the com line.

"Sulu here."

"Dr. Booyse has called again, Sulu." Uhura said. "She needs to see someone personally about the rest of the medical supplies."

Sulu and Chekov looked at each other. Chekov looked away, glad that he had not answered the hail from the bridge. Sulu sighed helplessly. "Tell her I'll be right there."

"Don't sound so enthusiastic." Uhura laughed.

"You owe me." Sulu said to Chekov.

"I went the last time she called." Chekov protested.

"Chief, beam me directly to the infirmary." Sulu ordered.

"Aye sir."

Sulu materialized in the new starbase's medical facility. Supplies were stacked everywhere. The med tech and nurse that had come with Dr. Booyse were busily trying to organize things. The rest of the medical staff was due in sometimes in the next month.

"Commander Sulu." Dr. Booyse sounded exasperated. "The medical supplies are arriving in a random order. It's bad enough that the environmental controls aren't working properly, but I have no hypo-sprays. I have some of the medications that go inside the hypo-sprays, but no hypo-sprays. Doesn't this seem somewhat illogical to you, Commander? What am I suppose to do if someone actually needs a doctor around here?"

"Doctor." Sulu said hoping he sounded more patient than annoyed. "We are doing the best we can. I will be sure that hypo-sprays are in the next shipment. If you will just give us some time and patience, we'll complete delivery as soon as possible."

"Commander, the hypo-sprays are only an example." The doctor spoke to him slowly as if he was a child. "Would it be possible for me to group and allocate the supplies in a logical order?"

"I'm afraid that would only slow the process down." Sulu said. "My orders are to complete delivery as quickly as possible."

"Dr. McCoy!" Dr. Booyse called as she saw him in the hall outside the infirmary door. He came into the room. "Perhaps you can help me."

"What seems to be the problem?" McCoy asked.

"The delivery of supplies is unacceptable." Dr. Booyse complained. "Mr. Sulu is unwilling to allow me to organize my supplies so they can be delivered in a logical manner."

"Mr. Sulu?" McCoy asked.

"Sir, I am attempting to coordinate the delivery of supplies to ten different departments. Using shuttle crafts and cargo transporters we are making the deliveries in the shortest order possible. Medical supplies are a top priority. They are being delivered by transporter only to minimize the time caused by excessive handling." Sulu reported.

Dr. McCoy looked at Dr. Booyse. She was an attractive though stern looking woman in her early forties. With her chestnut brown hair cut short and feathered away from her face, she reminded McCoy of one of his highschool teachers. It was not a pleasant memory. "The only suggestion I can make, Doctor, is that I will return to Enterprise with Mr. Sulu and see what I can do to speed up the process."

"Sulu to Enterprise. Two to beam up."

When they were safely back in the cargo bay, McCoy said. "Carry on, Mr. Sulu."

"Aye aye, Doctor." Sulu answered as McCoy left the cargo bay. He used the computer terminal to search the manifests. Chekov had just finished logging the contents of the latest shuttle to leave. Sulu asked. "Any idea where the hypo-sprays might be?"

"I just saw them." Chekov said taking over the console. "There. They will go down next. Is that what she was worried about?"

"Oh, I don't know." Sulu said sarcastically. "I appear to be too stupid to understand her problems."

"I am glad it is not just me." Chekov laughed. "While you were over there, I went over the rest of the medical supplies. If we ignore engineering and life supports for the next hour, we can finish up medical before lunch."

"Good idea." Sulu agreed. "But I hate giving in to someone with that kind of attitude."

"What you hate is that she talks down to you."

"You're right." Sulu laughed. "So let's not give her any more opportunities to talk to us."

With efficient use of the transporter, they delivered ninety eight percent of the medical supplies in the next hour. After lunch they resumed delivering everything as it came up. It was a massive job. Later in the afternoon Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy came into the cargo bay.

"Report, Mr. Sulu." Kirk said.

"Moving right along Sir." Sulu said. "Essential supplies have been delivered. Second priority items should be finished by end of shift. Then it's just miscellaneous items to clean things up."

"Very good, Mr. Sulu." Kirk said. "Commander Von Maltz has requested assistance in getting operations up and running. See what he needs. Chekov can finish things here."

"Aye Sir."

Sulu and McCoy beamed over together. This time they materialized in the new base's transporter room. Ensign Withers, who was at the controls, was one of Enterprise's crew. "Don't they have any of their own people?" McCoy asked as they walked down the hall.

"Not many." Sulu answered. "Regular crew here will be two hundred and fifty people. Right now they have twenty five."

"Starfleet in all its infinite wisdom." McCoy said.

"Aye sir."

They parted company. Sulu going to operations and McCoy to the infirmary. McCoy would help Dr. Booyse get organized. He also intended to offer a little insight, since this was her first deep space assignment.

Sulu took the turbo lift to operations. It was basically the bridge of the station. All other systems could be monitored and accessed from here. Instead of one main viewer the circular room's wall were lined with large monitors that monitored every angle of space around the station. Each station had smaller monitors. Sulu found the design somewhat confusing, but it was obvious that once acclimated it would be a workable set up. There were seven work stations. The communication station and security station seemed individualized, but the others were interchangeable science stations.

Commander Von Maltz stood in front of one of these science stations. He was a large man, powerfully built. Sulu had met him several times in the last two weeks. As far as Sulu could see the Commander had no sense of humor. Two Enterprise engineers crouched by the back of the station that Von Maltz was studying with a set of field tools laid out on the floor next to them. The covers were off several access ports around the room exposing the inner workings of the computers.

"Commander Von Maltz." Sulu said, "What can I do to help?"

"Lt. Commander Sulu." Von Maltz said turning to Sulu. "Are you alone?"

"Aye Sir."

"Very well." Von Maltz said. He would have like more help but there was no point in complaining about Captain Kirk's orders. "The only station I have on line is communications. Mr. Scott has promised me power but I am still waiting."

Sulu turned to the engineers. "What's the problem, Tenzin?"

"Not sure, Mr. Sulu." One of the young men said looking up from his tricorder to report. "But we are only getting partial power. We are trying to track it down now, Sir."

"Would more techs up here help you find the problem faster?" Sulu asked.

"No Sir." The young man shook his head. "It's a two man job."

"Very well." Sulu nodded to Tenzin and turned towards one of the redundant science

stations. He touched a few controls. He got some response but not what he was looking for. He sat down and tried a few more controls. Finally he switched on the comline. "Scotty, this is Sulu in operations. What have you got?"

"There is a energy drain in the main conduit, Sulu." Scotty reported. "I'm sending Underhill in now to check it out. I'll have an answer for you within the hour."

"Another hour." Von Maltz said to himself and turned back to the station he had been trying to access.

Sulu shrugged. Scotty always gave long time estimates. He went to the next station "At least the secondary computer is on line. Main computer is just waiting for it's memory core, that will give us voice activated interface. And the environmental controls seem to have stabilized."

"Yes, it's coming along slowly." Von Maltz admitted. It was frustrating but not unbearable. "Contact Enterprise, Mr. Sulu. Tell them we are ready to down load the main computer memory core."

"Aye Sir." Sulu said and sat down at the communications station. "Starbase 68 to Enterprise. We are ready to down load main memory core."

"We read you, Starbase." Uhura's voice said. "Please stand by."

"Standing by."

The two Enterprise engineers crawled from one station to another, trying to determine what the problem was. Finally, Von Maltz got some response from the station's view screen control administrator and the main view screens on the wall came to life. It was a beautiful sight. The monitor that had the Enterprise on it was looking up at her.

"Sir." Mr. Tenzin said. His assistant opened a hatch in the floor and started down a ladder. "We need to trace this back to engineering."

"Very well." Von Maltz nodded.

After the engineers had left, Sulu glanced around at the other monitors. There was something small and far away on one of them. Sulu went to one of the science stations, but got no information. "Commander. What do you make of that?"

Von Maltz looked at the monitor Sulu indicated. He asked, "Still no sensors?"

"No sir." Sulu said, he returned to communications and hailed the star ship. "Enterprise. We have something, possibly a ship, on base monitors. But we have no sensors. What do you make of it?"

"We have it, Sulu." Kirk said over the audio connection. "Three ships approaching. Unknown origin. Do you have shields yet?"

"No Sir." Sulu reported. Von Maltz joined Sulu at the communication station. "Mr. Scott is attempting to track down a power loss now."

"We'll go over and say hello." Kirk said lightly. "Perhaps it's just the neighbors curious to see who's moving in."

"Captain Kirk," Commander Von Maltz said. "May I remind you that we have no weapons or shields on line."

"I understand Commander." Kirk said. "However if these ships prove unfriendly I will need some room to maneuver. Enterprise out."

"Scotty." Sulu called when he switched the comline to engineering again. "Shields are

top priority. We have unidentified visitors approaching."

"Acknowledged."

Sulu and Von Maltz tried everything to bring more and more of the systems on line. But they still had no weapons, no sensors, and no shields. All they could do was watch as the Enterprise approached the three ships. As the ships came closer, they realized they were much smaller than the Enterprise. Sulu kept the channel open so that they could hear what happened.

Enterprise transmitted friendship messages. The ships answered. They called themselves the Della Mir Community. They said they were surprised to find a Federation Outpost being guarded by a warship on the edge of their space. Captain Kirk explained that they were on a mission of exploration and scientific discovery. He did his best to convince them that the Federation and the Della Mir could exchange information. They did not seem convinced.

Suddenly one of the ships sent a beam towards the station. They were still quite far away. Both Sulu and Von Maltz were surprised to see the beam come at them. But they did not feel the beam hit. Without the sensors or computer they had no method of analyzing what was happening. Von Maltz tried to access the weapons. As he touched the control panel he was hit by a burst of energy that sent him across the room. He landed unconscious on the floor.

"Medic to ops," Sulu called on the comline, without waiting for an answer he switched the com channel back to engineering. "Scotty I need those shields."

"You've got them Sulu." Scotty said crossing his fingers. Sulu raised the shields. The read outs looked ok.

"What about sensors, weapons?" Sulu asked the engineer.

"I'll try." Scotty answered but he sounded doubtful. Drs. McCoy and Booyse arrived and went directly to Von Maltz.

"What happened?" Booyse asked.

"An energy beam of some kind was channeled through the controls. It knocked him down." Sulu said quickly going from one station to the next. He touched the controls gingerly hoping they wouldn't be another energy burst. He was becoming more familiar with the working of this station than he ever wanted. He set the comline to base-wide announcement and said. "This is Sulu. Anyone not involved in emergency procedures report to ops. I need some help up here."

"What kind of energy?" Booyse asked as Dr. McCoy scanned the unconscious man and administered a hypo-spray.

"If I had some sensors or even the most basic equipment on line, I might have an idea." Sulu said to her. "All I know is the energy had a blue light to it."

Von Maltz stirred a bit. McCoy grabbed his arm and yanked him into a sitting position. "Dr. Booyse, help me get him to sick bay." She couldn't believe he meant they were going to physically carry him to the infirmary themselves. But that was obviously what he meant. "Come on, Doctor. Emergency situations call for emergency measures." She grabbed the other arm and helped him.

A young woman, just out of the Academy, stepped off the turbo lift. She got out of the way to let the doctors take the commander onto the lift. She looked to Sulu and said, "Ensign Gonzoles reporting, Sir."

"Good." Sulu said. "Take the communications station, Ensign."

She hesitated. "Sir, I've never manned-

"No time like the present to learn, Ensign." He cut her off. He quickly pointed out the controls. "Frequencies, send, receive, volume. That's all you need for now. Monitor Enterprise's communications. Tell me if anything new is happening."

"Aye, Sir." She said tentatively as she studied the control board. She had not seen a Star Fleet communication board since she had taken communications theory two years earlier.

"You'll do fine." he assured her. "Looks like no one else is going to show up."

As if on cue a call came in from the infirmary. He switched on the comline and answered, "Sulu here."

"Don't expect much help, Mr. Sulu." Dr. McCoy said. "We have twelve people down here who were all rendered unconscious by that energy burst. What crew members are left are attempting to repair the control panels that were knocked out."

"Thank you, Doctor." Sulu said and switched channels. "Scotty, report."

"That energy burst impacted on all systems." Scotty reported on the comline. "Shields are holding at 72%. Life support and communications seem to be the only systems unaffected. I have one phaser bank charged."

"Mr. Sulu, Captain Kirk is hailing us." Gonzales reported.

Sulu came over to her station and switched the connection to visual. "Sulu here."

"Report Mr. Sulu." Kirk said.

"Twelve people injured, Captain. Commander Von Maltz is among them." Sulu reported. "Life support, communications, and shields are on line. We are charging weapon systems."

"Mr. Sulu, do not take any aggressive action without my direct orders." Kirk said as Dr. McCoy came off the turbo lift and joined Sulu in operations.

"Aye, Sir." Sulu answered. "Is there anything we can do, Captain?"

"Wait, Mr. Sulu." Kirk said. "The Della Mir appear to be a rational people. I think we can come to an understanding. Kirk out."

Sulu relaxed just a bit. "How are things in the infirmary, Doc?"

"Calming down. Dr. Booyse has everything under control." McCoy reported. "How are things up here?"

"You heard the Captain. We wait." Sulu said. He smiled at McCoy. Sulu knew the Doctor was there to check on him. But this was not Sulu's first command situation, there was no need for concern. "In the meantime, Ensign Gonzales is becoming an expert at the communications station."

"Is that true Ensign?" McCoy turned to look at the pretty young woman.

"No sir." Gonzales blushed. "But I'm trying."

"Don't worry about it, Gonzales." Sulu joked easily. "I trained Lt. Chekov when he came aboard Enterprise, therefore I can train anyone."

McCoy laughed heartily. Sulu sat down and McCoy joined him. "Hard day?"

"You have a gift for understatement, Doctor." Sulu smiled. He rubbed the back of his neck. "How is Commander Von Maltz?"

"He'll be fine." McCoy reported. "What ever was in that energy burst it was set to stun, not kill."

"That backs up the Captain's theory that the Della Mir are looking for a peaceful outcome to this situation." Sulu said. Of course Sulu trusted Captain Kirk's assessment of the situation. But as a command officer, Sulu constantly evaluated all situations for future reference. And he took those evaluations very seriously.

"Mr. Sulu," Gonzoles said. "The Enterprise is signaling ready to transmit the computer's core memory."

"Good." Sulu said. He leaned over Gonzoles's shoulder and showed her what to do. "Open this interface. The main computer is ready. Go ahead Enterprise. When it's done the main computer will activate and we'll be able to run this base without further problem."

"And if it doesn't activate?" Gonzoles asked.

"We call Spock." McCoy said. Sulu nodded.

The computer activated with no problem. Within the hour Scotty had full power restored. One by one the systems came on line. One by one the injured crew returned to their stations. A few had been aboard Enterprise when the Della Mir ships had appeared. Soon all Starbase personnel were on the base and slowly the Enterprise personnel were returning home.

"Lt. Kehr reporting for duty, Sir." Sulu turned. He hadn't seen nor heard Mr. Kehr come off the turbo lift. He was at least part Levian. He had the characteristically flat large nose and unusually small mouth, but he was almost as tall as Sulu. Which made him taller than any Levian Sulu had ever seen by half a meter.'

"Your station, Mr. Kehr?" Sulu asked.

"Security officer, Sir." Kehr answered.

"Take your station, Mr. Kehr."

Lt. Seal came off the turbo lift still braiding her hair. She clipped a barrette on it and came to attention. She recognized Sulu as an Enterprise officer but did not know him. "Lt. Seal, reporting for duty Sir."

"What is your station, Lieutenant?" Sulu asked.

"Communications officer, Sir."

"Take your station." Sulu said. He turned to Gonzoles. "You are relieved, Ensign. Good job."

Ensign Gonzoles surrendered her station to Lt. Seal as Cmdr. Von Maltz came onto the operations center.

"Lt. Commander Sulu." Von Maltz said with authority. "Report."

"The base is up and running, Sir." Sulu reported. "Main power is restored. All shields and weapons are operational. Engineering is running level three diagnostics on all stations and systems effected by the energy blast."

"Good work, Mr. Sulu." Von Martz said. "You are relieved."

"Thank you Sir." Sulu nodded and turned to join Gonzoles on the turbo lift. As the doors closed, he said, "Deck six."

"He could have said thank you." The Ensign grumbled.

"It doesn't matter." Sulu shrugged. "But you handled yourself admirably. Thanks for

your help."

"Sir! I didn't mean..." Gonzoles stuttered. She wasn't looking for praise for herself. Gonzoles bit her lip, she had to learn not to say everything that came into her head.

"I know." Sulu smiled briefly, then continued seriously. "But I was sincere. It was a potentially dangerous situation. You acted bravely and followed orders well."

"Thank you, Mr. Sulu." She said as the turbo lift stopped and he got off. He headed to the transporter room. He waited while the last of the engineering crew beamed back to Enterprise.

"Chief, am I the last Enterprise officer on the base?" Sulu asked the transporter room operator.

"No, Sir." The transporter chief responded. "We still have a small security crew that will work the night shift. And I show that Dr. McCoy has not yet logged out."

Sulu considered finding the doctor before returning to the ship, but he was off duty now. McCoy would return when his business was over. Besides he was ready for sleep and he did not particularly want to talk to Dr. Booyse again. He beamed over to Enterprise.

In his quarters, Sulu took the time to file his report on the incidents of the day. He made a point to mention Gonzoles. Sulu felt it was important to acknowledge when people performed well under stress. Especially the new ensigns. Having just graduated from the Academy, they were eager to do the work they had trained for but that eagerness could get them in trouble. Sometimes it blocked out good sense and training. And no matter how well they had done at the Academy, no one knew how they would handle the real thing until they got there