

The next morning Sulu didn't need his alarm to wake him, his stomach did that. Sometimes he just got caught up in what had to be done and forgot to eat. He dressed and met Chekov for breakfast. Sulu and Chekov compared notes. Chekov had been on the bridge during the previous days incident.

"What was it they hit us with?" Sulu asked.

"They called it an energy probe." Chekov said. "It is designed to impact on all energy systems except life support and communication. I believe they use it as a show of strength. It does not do any permanent damage."

"Unless you try to access the affected system." Sulu corrected him. "When anyone tried, not only was the person knocked unconscious but that panel was damaged."

"Interesting technology." Chekov said drinking his coffee. "The Captain was relieved to see you in command when he realized the Starbase was charging weapons."

"Why?"

"He was concerned that Commander Von Maltz might act rashly." Chekov explained. "We were attempting to convince the Della Mir that we meant no harm. The Captain was worried the base would fire without warning since it had already been hit."

"We had no sensors. No way of knowing what other weapons they had or even what they had already hit us with." Sulu said. "I don't know Von Maltz well, but he doesn't seem impulsive to me. The Enterprise was there with more information, more weapons, more people; it only made sense to wait and offer what support we could."

"Of course." Chekov agreed. "I think the Captain was relieved because he knew you. One less unknown for him to consider."

"That makes sense." Sulu said as he ate his large breakfast with relish.

Dr. McCoy and Captain Kirk were also having breakfast in the same dining hall this morning. Kirk got up and left first. Chekov checked his chronometer. They still had twenty minutes before they had to report. McCoy came by their table on the way out..

"A hearty breakfast, Mr. Sulu?" McCoy asked.

"I never found time for dinner last night, Doctor." Sulu explained. "Just catching up."

"I want to see you in sick bay, Mr. Sulu." McCoy said frowning.

"I'm on duty in less than twenty minutes, Sir."

"When your duties permit." McCoy said as he was leaving. "But today, Mr. Sulu."

"Aye, Sir." Sulu and Chekov cleared their table and went to work.

On the turbo lift, Chekov teased. "I think the doctor is readying a lecture for you."

"On the importance of eating regular meals?" Sulu laughed. "I haven't had one of those since my mother gave up on me. I think I was twelve."

"Mr. Sulu." Kirk said as they took their stations. "Good to have you back."

"Thank you Sir." Sulu said and quickly checked his console. They were still orbiting the Starbase. One of the Della Mir ships was also in orbit. The other two were out of sensor range. Everything seemed quiet.

"Captain." Commander Uhura said. "The base is being hailed by the Amazon, a transport cruiser. She'll arrive in three hours with additional starbase staff."

"Hail the Amazon, Commander." Kirk said. "Find out how much of the staff will be

arriving today. I'd like some idea of when we can get out of here."

"Aye Sir." Uhura answered and followed her orders. After a few minutes she reported. "Captain, the Amazon is the lead ship of three. Each is carrying thirty five crew members for the base and additional supplies."

"Over a hundred, Good." Kirk said thoughtfully. "I'll feel better when this station is fully staffed."

The morning passed slowly. The three cruisers, the Amazon, the Mississippi, and the Nile arrived with their passengers and cargo. The starbase was chaotic while people found their way around and supplies were unloaded. No civilians were being allowed to live on the base for the next six months because the base was new and the sector relatively uncharted. Lt. Dryden relieved Sulu for his lunch break. He took that opportunity to report to sick bay.

"You wanted to see me, Doc?" Sulu asked.

"Yes, Sulu." McCoy said and motioned him onto the exam table.

"I'm fine, Dr. McCoy." Sulu complained as he complied with McCoy's implied orders.

"I'll be the judge of that." McCoy grumbled as he guided the exam table into the horizontal position. All indicators were in the normal range. "Commander Von Maltz was impressed with your actions yesterday."

"Really?" Sulu asked.

"You sound surprised." McCoy commented. He adjusted the controls on the table to check some different readings.

"I just did what was necessary." Sulu responded. "And the Commander does not strike me as the kind of officer who hands out praise lightly."

"Never the less, you took command when your superior was injured. Von Maltz commended your handling of the situation." McCoy said. "from what I saw, I agree with his assessment."

"Thank you, Doctor. But is there a point?"

McCoy laughed. Yes, he would make a good captain. Kirk had been saying so for years. "Just that a commander must remember to take care of the entire crew, including himself."

"I don't think one missed meal constitutes neglect." Sulu said.

"No, you're right." McCoy said. "I just like to stop bad habits before they get started."

"I hear you, Doctor."

"Good. But have you heard from your girlfriend?" McCoy asked nonchalantly. Sulu involuntarily tensed.

He forced himself to relax and smiled. "Checking my blood pressure, Doc?"

McCoy laughed quietly to himself. "It did spike for a second there. Along with your heart rate." He returned the table to the vertical position and Sulu got up.

"To answer your question, no. I haven't heard from her since we left Earth a couple of weeks ago. How about you?"

"Actually I have. But she needed to report on an assignment I gave her regarding her sister." McCoy said.

"You talk like she's a member of the crew." Sulu said.

"Sometimes it's easier that way." McCoy said. "If you ever have daughters, you'll

understand."

Sulu didn't have an answer. He had barely acknowledge to the doctor that he and Jimmi were involved. He didn't want to even begin to think about the permanent relationship that children would bring. He checked his chronometer. "I'm going to get some lunch."

He grabbed a sandwich, eating it as he made his way back to the bridge. Chekov was already back at his station. Mr. Spock was in command. Later in the afternoon, Kirk came on the bridge. "Uhura, open a channel to the Della Mir."

"Aye Sir." Uhura answered and complied. "Channel open, Captain."

"Good day, Captain Kirk." the Della Mir commander said. This was Sulu's first chance to see this new species. Height was hard to tell on the view screen, but the lean build of this race made them seem tall. Their heads were long and narrow, also giving them an appearance of height. Their skin was green like Vulcans but more vivid. Their Captain, at least, was bald.

"Good day, Captain Hold-Drah." Kirk said pleasantly. "As you no doubt have observed, three transport ships have arrived with more staff for the Starbase."

"Yes, Captain." Hold-Drah said. "We have watched with interest."

"Over half of the crew has arrived," Captain Kirk continued. "And while we are still trying to get organized, I invite you and a limited number of your officers to join me on the station. I would like to be able to show you first hand the services the base will be able to offer you if our governments can reach an agreement."

"Thank you, Captain." the Della Mir captain said. "My first officer and I will join you."

"Good. We are transmitting the transporter coordinates. Enterprise out." Kirk said.

"Come on, Spock. Time to show the neighbors around. Mr. Sulu, you have the con."

"Aye Sir." Sulu responded. After the Captain left the bridge, Sulu took the center seat. Chekov had filled him in on the Della Mir's interest in using the base. It was located on the most distant edge of what they considered their space. They were a democratic collective of less than fifty worlds who did extensive trading in this area.

There was really nothing to do while they orbited Starbase 68. They monitored their instruments, performed routine maintenance, and played a lot of poker. There was no point in going aboard the Starbase. It was barely providing services to the crew that was there. Except for occasionally offering assistance with bulking systems, the Enterprise crew had very little interaction with the starbase crew.

They were in orbit for three days before someone reported the missing shuttle craft to Commander Scott. Scotty came onto the bridge shaking his head. It was something he felt he should tell the Captain face to face. He came down to the center seat. Kirk looked at Scotty with mild surprise and expectation.

"Captain." Scotty said. "It seems I must report that we are missing one shuttle craft."

"A missing shuttle craft, Mr. Scott." Kirk must have been bored. He sounded amused. Not the reaction Scotty had been expecting. "How did we manage that?"

"As far as I can tell, it must have landed on the base just before it was hit by that blasted energy probe. So it wasn't logged in on the base computer." Scotty said. "But what I can't figure out is how the pilot got home."

"Who was the pilot?" Kirk asked. Scotty shrugged.

"Captain," Chekov interrupted. "Two of the shuttle pilots we used to deliver supplies were assigned to the base. Lt. Khatib and Lt. Landor."

"You didn't notice that the shuttle never came back, Lt. Chekov?" Kirk asked.

"When the red alert sounded, I reported to the bridge." Chekov shrugged. "I guess I forgot about it."

"Mr. Sulu, go get our shuttle craft." Kirk said.

"Aye Captain." Sulu locked his station and left the bridge. He beamed over to the starbase. He took the turbo lift to the Starbase's massive shuttle bay. The missing shuttle was sitting at the end of the bay in launch position. As he made his way past the other shuttles, Ensign Gonzoles came off the Enterprise shuttle.

"Good morning, Commander Sulu." She said with a smile. "Enterprise informed us a pilot was coming to reclaim the shuttle. We thought you forgot about it."

"Morning Ensign Gonzoles." Sulu said. "I'm surprised to see you."

"I was just jockeying shuttles. Yours was back in the corner." She explained. "She's ready to go now."

He hadn't realized she was a pilot. He smiled at her and asked, "You don't mind if I check her out myself?"

"Of course not, Sir." Gonzoles said and followed him as he circled the ship for an initial visual inspection. They went inside together.

"Are things settling in around here?" Sulu asked as he took the pilot's seat and started a preflight check.

"Yes, of course everyone has to pitch in until the rest of the staff arrives." Gonzoles said.

"Which is ok, but I can't wait until I can start the job I came here for."

"Which is?"

"My assignment is with the astro-cartography team." She informed him with some pride. It was hard to contain herself. She was excited about her new job and she couldn't think of anyone she'd rather tell than Mr. Sulu. Not only had she gained respect for him as a commander, he was not bad looking. Nice smile, Gonzoles thought. "I'll pilot the mapping missions."

"Keep your eyes open." Sulu advised. "You never know what you will run into in uncharted space."

"Aye sir." She replied. He was finished his preflight check. She started towards the door. "I'll get out of your way."

"I'm in no hurry." Sulu said. This was the most interesting thing he had done all day. Gonzoles was an eager young officer and Sulu thought she had potential. "Astro-cartography? You wouldn't be flying the new runabout for these mapping missions?"

"Yes Sir." Gonzoles said proudly. "You want to see it?"

"Sure." Sulu stood up and followed her out of the ship and across the bay. Enterprise had brought the runabout to the Starbase, but Sulu hadn't had a chance to see it on the trip. The runabout was about twice the size of the regulation shuttle craft. It was loaded. Beside the pilots and copilot station, there were three science stations. It even had a minimal transporter. Sulu was impressed. "How fast does she go?"

"The specs. say warp five." Gonzoles said. She had spent the last couple of weeks before

leaving Earth getting certified on the new ship. She had flown it quite a bit in simulation, but had only taken the actual ship out a couple of times. "But I haven't had her above warp two yet. I'd like to take her out and see what she can really do, but Commander Von Maltz hasn't ok'd that yet."

"I'm sure he will once the rest of the crew arrives and the situation with the Della Mir is certain." Sulu assured her.

"You're right, of course." Gonzoles said. "But I sometimes have trouble waiting."

"It takes practice." Sulu said.

"Then I guess this is my chance to practice." she shrugged.

Sulu nodded. "I better get back." he started back towards the shuttle. "Good luck with your assignment, Ensign."

"Thank you, Sir." She smiled and watched as he returned to the Enterprise.

By the time Sulu returned to Enterprise he was off duty for the day. He went to his quarters and checked his correspondence file. He was hoping for a letter from Jimmi but there was nothing. He wondered if she was dealing out some kind of punishment because he had not answered her letters before. Perhaps he had better make the first move. How could he let this twenty year old girl confuse him so. He had spent this past year trying to get her out of his mind, but he had not been successful.

As he tried to think about what to say to Jimmi, he couldn't help but think about Gonzoles. He didn't even know her first name. But she was attractive and their conversation had been easy. They didn't have to explain anything. They were both Starfleet, both pilots. He already knew he could count on her. He had known Jimmi for years, but the workings of her mind were still a mystery to him. In a couple of hours time, he knew all he needed to know about Gonzoles. Except why he kept thinking about her.

He gave up on trying to record a letter and went to dinner. Chekov and Uhura were already there. Sulu joined them. Chekov looked surprised to see him. "I thought you got lost."

"I came back." Sulu said. He looked at the food on his tray, he wasn't particularly interested. "Want to go the gym tonight? A little racket ball?"

"Sure," Chekov answered "but I'll meet you there. In about an hour?"

Sulu nodded as Chekov got up and left. Uhura watched Sulu pick at his food.

"Something wrong?"

"Nothing that a little change wouldn't cure." Sulu said. He smiled at her "I'm sure I'm not the only one on the ship feeling a little stir crazy."

"No, I think everybody is feeling it." She agreed. She was feeling it herself. This crew was not used to sitting around doing nothing. "I just thought it might have something to do with our recent stop at Earth. I understand you spent the entire shore leave with Jimmi."

"And how would you come by that information?"

"From Jimmi, of course." Uhura said. "She seemed very happy to have things out in the open."

"Does she?" Sulu said non-committally. He wondered how many other people on the ship had heard from Jimmi and when she was going to bother to send a letter to him.

"Is she reading things wrong, Hikaru?" Uhura asked

"I don't know." Sulu said trying to sound calm. "I haven't heard from her."

Uhura knew him well. She heard the underlying annoyance in his voice. She saw the tension in his face. "Why don't you call her. We're sitting here doing nothing. It's really the perfect time."

"Finding her might be a problem." Sulu said. It was an excuse and he knew it. "I'm not sure if she'd be at school or the bar."

"You mean she doesn't have a PID code for Earthlink?" Uhura asked.

Sulu shrugged. "I have been out of touch with her. When I was on Earth, it didn't come up."

Uhura shook her head. It wasn't like Sulu to come up with all these excuses. He knew Uhura could find the personal identification code and connect them in a matter of minutes. She studied him. He had pushed his plate away. Uhura was probably the one person on the ship he could talk to about his feelings, but he did not know where to start. Lt. Commander Uhura stood up and quickly cleared the table. "Come on." She ordered.

They stepped into the turbo lift together and she requested deck eleven. They were obviously on their way to his quarters. "What's up, Girl?"

Uhura smiled at him. He rarely called her that anymore. "Has it been so long since you've had an actual girlfriend that you've forgotten the rules?"

"There are rules?" he laughed.

"There are always rules." Uhura told him as they reached his quarters. She went directly to his computer console and called the communications officer on the bridge. "Ensign Posner. This is Uhura. I need access to Earthlink at this station."

"Aye, Commander." Posner responded. "Stand by."

In a moment the welcome screen from Earthlink appeared on his console. Uhura requested access to the PID listings and found the right number for J.M. McCoy, with a billing address on Jade Street in San Francisco. She made the connection and left him there.

Jimmi's face appeared on his screen. When she realized it was him, she smiled widely. "Harry. How are you?"

"Hello Jeanie." He smiled. "I'm fine. Just a little bored."

"Bored?" Jimmi asked.

"Routine mission." He responded. "Too routine for my tastes. I've....missed you."

"I've missed you too." She wondered what was wrong and if he would tell her about it. At least she could tell him her news. "I've been very busy between the Palace and school work. My history professor is recommending me for a summer internship at UCLA. They've discovered some records, paper and very early computer tapes, that are pre WW III. Evidently it's hundreds of hours worth of information and they need some people to go through it."

"Why not just have the computer scan it?" Sulu asked.

"We are talking ancient records here. The people at UCLA are worried the paper records may just fall apart if not handled very delicately and the computers are not at all compatible with what we have today. They think if they just scan it something might be missed." Jimmi said. "If I get it, the work should be interesting."

"Sounds like it is just up your alley." Hikaru smiled.

When he did not say anything else, Jimmi said, "It is so good to talk to you, but you haven't said why you called, Harry."

"No real reason." Sulu said. "I just wanted to hear your voice, to see you, and remember."

"Remember?" Jimmi asked.

"Remember laying in bed with you and walking on the beach with you." He smiled. "And dancing with you."

"You have a romantic heart, Commander." Jimmi sighed. "You know, Lenny is of the opinion that long distance relationships can't work."

"Maybe he just doesn't want this one to work."

"Maybe." Jimmi admitted. But she didn't care what Lenny thought. "All I know is I miss you terribly. When can I see you again?"

"I don't know." Sulu said. "You know that getting back to Earth is not easy."

"If you let me know when Enterprise will be at Starbase Twelve." Jimmi suggested. "I'll come meet you."

"As soon as I know, I'll send you the exact date." Sulu said slowly. "But if that's a summer internship, you may not be able to come."

"A day or two off isn't going to hurt anyone." Jimmi said. Sulu's console blinked.

"Baby, I am using up a lot of subspace time here. I've got to go."

She nodded. She understood. "I love you, Harry."

"I love you too, Jeanie." He terminated the connection.

When he got to the gym, Chekov was waiting for him. They played hard and fast, using up energy and frustration. After their third game Chekov and Sulu sat on the floor of the racket ball court trying to catch their breath. Chekov threw his racket at the wall in frustration. Sulu laid down and looked at the ceiling breathing hard.

"Are you getting better, or am I getting worse?" Sulu asked.

Chekov grinned and said. "I am getting better."

"I hope we'll be done with this assignment soon." Sulu said.

"What do you have to complain about?" Chekov asked kicking Sulu's foot. "You got a commendation. I forgot a shuttle craft."

"The Captain did not seem too upset by that." Sulu said.

"Not right now." Chekov said sullenly. "But he will remember it. I know I will hear about it again."

"You're right. But there's nothing you can do about it now." Sulu sat up. "But going back over to the base gave me a chance to see the new runabout."

"Really?"

"Yeah, Ensign Gonzoles showed it to me." Sulu said. "She will be piloting the mapping missions in the runabout."

"Ah, the pretty one." Chekov laughed. "She was hard to miss on the trip here."

"That's her." Sulu nodded. "First assignment out of the Academy. She's green, but she has potential."

"As an officer or otherwise?" Chekov laughed.

"Both." Sulu laughed too.

The court door opened. Lt. Quinn and Ensign Kigali stood in the doorway with their rackets. "You guys playing or talking?"

"We're done." Sulu said standing up. "It's all yours, Colleen."

Chekov retrieved his racket from where he had thrown it. He smiled at the petite ensign "Good luck, Sookie."

Ensign Kigali smiled back at him. "Better keep your luck, Pavel. You'll need it the next time the Captain is looking for a shuttle craft."

"Funny. Very funny." Chekov said and followed Sulu out of the court.