

Dr. McCoy beamed back over to the station again. Over half the crew had reported but not one of the new arrivals was part of the medical staff. So Dr. Booyse was now trying to run an infirmary for one hundred and fifty people with the help of one nurse and one med tech. That was less than a skeleton crew even by Starfleet standards.

"Good morning, Stella." Dr. McCoy said as he walked into the infirmary.

"Is it morning?" Dr. Booyse asked. "How can you tell?"

"You'll get used to idea of living on a station." McCoy smiled. "There may not be any sunshine but your body clock will adjust."

"Oh that's not the problem." She explained. "Being the only doctor here, I am on call around the clock."

"Have you been up all night?" McCoy asked.

"I got some sleep. But they had a head injury down on the landing bay around 03:00 hours. It was minor, but..." Dr. Booyse said with a yawn.

"Why don't you get some sleep now?" McCoy suggested. "I'll watch things here."

"Are you sure?" Dr. Booyse asked cautiously optimistic at the thought of seeing her bunk again..

"The Enterprise is boring as hell right now." McCoy smiled, shooing her out of the infirmary. "Go on, Doctor."

"Thank you, Dr. McCoy." She hurried off to her quarters.

McCoy pulled out his communicator and called Enterprise. "McCoy to Enterprise."

"Enterprise."

"Uhura, have Dr. Lopez report to me in the station's infirmary and let me talk to the Captain." McCoy ordered.

"Aye, Doctor." Uhura responded. McCoy spent a few minutes clearing his idea with Captain Kirk. It was more of a courtesy than anything else. The medical staff was under McCoy's command and outside the normal military structure. They of course had to deal with the daily rules and regulations of military life, but when it came to a medical decision even an intern could over ride an Admiral. Kirk approved the idea

Dr. Lopez reported to Dr. McCoy. He was an earnest young man who had just finished his internship. McCoy knew he was very serious at his job, but in his off hours he had a rather odd sense of humor. He found humor in things others found mundane or even tragic. And he was making a career out of dating as many female members of the crew as he could.

"Good morning Robert," McCoy said pleasantly when he came in.

"Good morning, Dr. McCoy." Robert Lopez smiled. "I don't see any medical emergency."

"Then you haven't looked hard enough, Dr. Lopez." McCoy said. "There are over one hundred and fifty people on this base now. Another hundred will report over the next month. They have one doctor, one nurse, one med tech."

"Dr. Booyse is going to be busy." Lopez observed.

"I haven't talked to her yet, but if she is agreeable, I'd like you to stay here until the rest of her staff shows up." McCoy said. "On loan, the Enterprise will be back for you when the station is fully staffed."

Before Lopez could answer, two officers walked into the infirmary. Dr. Lopez immediately went to help. The woman, Ensign Ortel, had plasma burns on her hands. She had bravely managed to control a break in the plasma flow conduit Lt. Quon explained. Her quick action had saved everyone in the area from contamination.

"Lt. Quon." Dr. McCoy said as Dr. Lopez took care of Ensign Ortel's injuries. "Why are you having such a rash of accidents in a new station?"

"Mr. Scott said it was to be expected with a new station. The crew is not totally familiar with the equipment or each other. He also said that the initiation of new systems doesn't always go by the book." Quon said. "But it does seem like a lot of problems. By the way, the replicators are off line."

"What's wrong with them?" McCoy growled.

Quon shrugged. "Lt. Chaney is running a diagnostic now."

McCoy and Lopez manned the infirmary for the rest of the shift. The rash of minor accidents continued. Mostly bumps and bruises. By afternoon Nurse Bennett reported for duty. Dr. Lopez took an instant liking to her. Especially to her winning smile. She was a few years older than him but that didn't bother Bobby Lopez one bit. She had deep brown eyes and hair to match.

Dr. Booyse came into the infirmary to see Dr. Lopez and Nurse Bennett enjoying one of his slightly off color jokes. "Really Doctor!" Bennett laughed. "That's not funny."

"Sure it is." He grinned. "As long as it's not your dog."

"Dr. Lopez." Dr. Booyse said. "It's good to see you again. Was Dr. McCoy called back to Enterprise?"

"No, Dr. Booyse." Lopez tried to stop smiling. "He's in your office."

"Thank you." Dr. Booyse said. She went into her office. Dr. McCoy was sitting at her desk. He looked up from the computer screen as she came in.

"Have a good nap?" he smiled pleasantly.

"Yes. I am well rested. What is Dr. Lopez doing here?" she asked.

McCoy closed the Enterprise file he had been reviewing and let her have her desk back. "I wanted to talk to you about that. I can loan you Dr. Lopez until the rest of your staff reports. And I spoke to my head nurse. She could afford to let you have one of her nurses too."

"I don't know what to say." Dr. Booyse said.

"Just let me know if you want the nurse. I believe Chapel had Lt. Zackowski in mind."

"Zackowski would be wonderful. He's a good man." Dr. Booyse said. "But Lopez? I don't know."

"I know he's a bit green." McCoy admitted. "Frankly that is why I chose him. He could learn a lot here in a month and I'd get a better doctor back."

"I don't mind his being young." Booyse said. "It is his attitude towards women that I don't appreciate."

"I hadn't noticed a problem." McCoy said. "Please explain, Doctor."

"You haven't noticed that he makes a pass at every woman he meets?" Booyse asks seriously.

"I have noticed that he fancies himself quite the ladies man." McCoy admitted. "But I

also have observed that when it comes to medicine he is all business. And he knows his stuff. Are you concerned he'll have a problem with a woman as a boss?"

"Yes. I am concerned." She said.

"Well if that's a true assessment, we'd better fix that now before it becomes a major problem." Dr. McCoy said. "I can't think of any one better qualified to handle the situation than you, Doctor."

She looked at him suspiciously. "I'm not sure how to take that, Leonard."

"Take it as it was meant, Stella." He laughed. But McCoy added more seriously. "I have confidence in your ability to handle the situation. Let him stay. You need the help. He needs the experience. If it's a problem, we'll deal with it. Give the kid a chance."

"Fine, but I demand a high level of professionalism of my staff." She said.

"I don't think you have anything to worry about." McCoy said. He stepped out of the office. "Dr. Lopez, get your gear from Enterprise. When you are settled in your quarters, report to Dr. Booyse regarding scheduling."

"Aye aye Doctor." Lopez said and left the infirmary.

"I'll have Zackowski report tonight too." McCoy said to Booyse who had followed him out of the office. "Sorry I can't spare a tech. I'm short myself."

"We'll be fine." Booyse said. "Thank you for your help, Dr. McCoy."

McCoy reported back to Enterprise. He had missed dinner with Kirk. He joined Uhura who was already in the dining hall. They caught up on the days events which were so routine that they had little to talk about.

"Can I ask you a question, Uhura?" McCoy asked finally.

"Of course, Doctor."

"Do you ever run into problems with men who don't deal well with women bosses?" McCoy asked.

She looked at him, wondering what had brought on that question. "Personally I haven't run in to it. It's impossible to get through the Academy without having superiors of every species and gender. But I know other women officers who have run into occasionally. Why do you ask?"

"It came up when I was over on the station today." McCoy said thoughtfully. "I didn't see the problem, but the woman officer was concerned."

"As long as a person is doing their job, what else can you ask for?" Uhura said.

"Regulations don't change feelings. It's been my experience that if a junior officer can't get past problems with working with different species or gender, they don't stay in Starfleet long."

"You're right, Uhura." McCoy smiled. "I guess I'll just have to wait and see. It's only a month."

Finally the Enterprise left orbit of Starbase 68. The systems were all on line. Three quarters of the staff had reported. And the Federation had come to an agreement in theory with the Della Mir Community to exchange information on the scientific front and not to interfere with each other otherwise. The details were to be worked out by the diplomats.

"Captain's log. Stardate 7923.5." James T. Kirk recorded from the command chair of the

U.S.S. Enterprise. "Now that we have dropped off the supplies and twenty five new officers at Starbase 68, there is room to breathe again on Enterprise. We are on route to Turkana IV for routine medical check of the colonist, but remain on call for the new star base for as long as necessary."