

When they were done with their dinner, Jimmi and Hikaru took a long slow walk around the base. In the center of the main shopping area on the base was a large open area that was four decks high. This was Star Base 12's park. On the three decks above the park, open walkways ringed the area. All the base's businesses and civilian services surrounded the park. Small trees, bushes and flowering plants surrounded play equipment that was the base's playground.

They were not the only couple walking in and around the park. The base was always crowded in July when the new ensigns reported for duty to the star ships and science vessels. As they came into the playground, their conversation died down. They stopped. Jimmi leaned against the jungle gym and looked around. She could live here. In some ways it reminded her of the Enterprise. She wondered what it sounded like when most of the people were asleep.

"What are you thinking about?" Sulu asked smiling at her. She was rarely so quiet.

She sighed and turned her attention back to him. She returned his smile, leaned towards him and spoke softly as if relaying a secret. "I was thinking that I want you to kiss me. Do you think you can handle that assignment, Lt. Commander?"

"I think I can manage." He smiled and kissed her lightly. She closed her eyes. He kissed her again with more passion, but he was aware of every passing person. She could feel him pull back. Jimmi sighed again. Why couldn't he just ever let go?

"Perhaps we should return to the ship." He suggested softly in her ear.

"Perhaps I should take the first transport back tomorrow." She straightened up and started back towards the transporter room.

He reached out and grabbed her arm to stop her. "What?"

"I think it was a mistake for me to come here." Jimmi said. She looked down to avoid looking him in the eye.

"Why do you say that?" He asked softly, pulling her close and breathing in the scent of her light sweet perfume. "I'm glad you are here."

"Are you?" She whispered. She wanted to believe him, but he had lied to her before. She wanted to just lay her head on his shoulder and believe him. But Jimmi shook her head. "I'm going back to Earth in the morning. I'd go now if I could."

"You are the most contrary girl I've ever met." Sulu said. He turned her face towards him so that she had to look him in the eye. "You insisted on coming here. And now you are running away from me. Or is it from something else?"

Jimmi wondered how much she could really tell him. She backed away from him, bumping into the jungle gym. Crossing her arms in front of her, she shrugged and said. "I don't know what I'm doing when I am with you."

"What do you mean?" he asked. She looked at the floor, not sure what to say. "When are you going to trust me enough to tell me the truth?"

"The truth is I don't like to beg, Harry." Jimmi said so softly that he was not sure that he had heard her right.

"What?"

"That's what I've been doing. Begging for your attention and your time." She said looking up at him now. She could not help but add, "I'm done with it."

"Don't be silly." He dismissed her statement.

"Silly?!" Jimmi asked, louder than she intended. Lowering her voice a bit, she said. "You want me to tell you the truth, then you don't listen to what I have to say. I'm tired of doing what everyone else wants me to do."

"Since when do you do anything you don't want to do?"

"I'm in school because that's what Dad wants. I'm at the bar because that's what Lenny wants. And when it comes to you and me, it's whatever you want." Jimmi said. "Whatever happened to what I want?"

"Isn't your analysis a little simplistic?" Sulu smiled at her tolerantly. Jimmi asserting absolutes like this was nothing new to him. "Besides I have it on good authority that Lenny does whatever you want."

"But you don't." She said softly.

"What would you think of me if I did?"

"Does it really matter?" She sighed and turned to leave.

"Are you running away again?" He asked calmly.

"If I am, so what?" She asked, suddenly angry again. Damn him. Why was he always so calm? "Am I suppose to honestly believe you care how I feel? And if you cared about me at all, you'd give me a little respect."

"You think I don't respect you?" His answer this time was not so calm. He had done everything he could not to take advantage of her. Damn her. "How can you say that?"

"I think you are ashamed of me. How can you respect someone you don't want to be seen with? So I will relieve you of that duty." She turned on her heel and ran away. Damn him. She hadn't meant to say that. She hadn't wanted to run out like that. She hadn't wanted to prove him right. Jimmi went to the transporter room and beamed over to Enterprise. By the time she walked into her father's cabin she was talking to herself.

"I can't believe he said that!" She mumbled. Jimmi felt like punching something. She paced back and forth in the small area in front of her father's desk. "I can't believe I said that!"

"You're home early." McCoy said from the doorway to his bunk alcove.

Jimmi looked at her father and asked. "What is wrong with me? Why do I listen to him? Do I have a blinking light over my head that says Idiot?!"

"Have a good time, Dear?" he smiled at her and ignored her tirade. The cabin door signal chimed. Jimmi closed her eyes and willed him to go away. McCoy leaned against the partition that separated his bunk from the rest of the room and watched her. He asked, "Aren't you going to answer that?"

"I wasn't planning to." Jimmi snapped.

"Then I will." McCoy said and straightened up to walk towards the door.

"I'll get it!" Jimmi snarled. She turned and stepped into the door's sensor range. It opened. Sulu stepped in without waiting for an invitation.

"We are not done." He said hotly.

"Yes, we are." She shot back. Jimmi considered running again. But she refused to give him the satisfaction. She stood her ground. Hands on her hips. Ready to do battle.

Sulu glanced in McCoy's direction. "Excuse me, Doctor."

"Don't mind me." McCoy said pleasantly. He sat at his desk and folded his arms across

his chest to watch.

"You can't make a statement like that and walk away." Sulu said trying desperately to control his anger and ignore the Doctor.

"I can do anything I want." Jimmi replied with a toss of her curls. "Because I am simplistic, naive, and let's not forget too young!"

"You are putting words in my mouth." Sulu protested. He had tried to keep control of the situation but she had the ability to make him angrier than anyone he had ever met. "And it doesn't explain what you meant."

"I don't know how to make it more clear." Jimmi said. She glanced quickly at her father then back at Sulu. "It seems obvious to me. And you never denied any of it."

"You never gave me a chance." He spoke quietly, measuring each breath. "You just make assumptions and go from there. You don't know how I feel!"

"Because you never tell me! How many times have I asked?" She demanded loudly. Putting both hands on his chest, Jimmi shoved him away from her as she added, "All I ever hear about is your precious career."

Sulu took a deep breath. This was getting way out of hand. Dr. McCoy appeared far too amused for Sulu's comfort. "Good night, Doctor." He said quickly, then grabbed her wrist and pulled her out of the cabin with him. "Come on."

"What? Where are we going?" She asked as he pulled her into the turbo lift. She was still angry. She wouldn't have gone with him at all except that she still had things to yell at him and she would rather yell them when her father was not in the room.

"Deck eleven." Sulu said, ordering the turbo lift on its way. He glared at her when he added. "I did not appreciate having that conversation in front of your father."

"Conversation?!" Jimmi snickered, folding her arms across her chest. "Honey, that was a fight. And I hope Dad enjoyed it."

The turbo lift door opened. Sulu grabbed her arm and practically dragged her to his cabin. Luckily the corridor had been empty. Sulu had had enough spectators for the night. Once in his cabin, he let go of her arm and faced her.

"Now we can talk." Sulu declared.

"I thought your quarters were off limits." She mocked him, hands on her hips again.

"You seem to have taken that option away from me." Sulu said. "What is all this nonsense about you not ever doing what you want and about begging?"

"You don't want to hear it!" Jimmi said angrily. "You don't care."

"Stop right there." Sulu ordered. "You don't know what I feel. Stop making accusations and talk to me about what you feel."

"Don't give me orders." Jimmi snapped. "I am not a child!"

"Then calm down." He took a deep breath in an effort to calm himself. He managed a more rational tone when he said, "And talk to me."

Jimmi just stared at him. She did not want to fight with him. She had not come to Star Base 12 to fight. She sighed. He watched her shoulders drop, her body relax. He felt he could see the anger draining away. Finally she said, "If I thought you really wanted to understand... "

"Of course I really want to understand." he said gently. Now that she had stopped

yelling, he felt he had a small measure of control of the situation. "Now explain what you meant on the base."

"I don't know what you want me to say." she said softly. She hung her head, almost closing her eyes to avoid him. "All I know is you don't want to be alone with me. You don't want to be seen with me."

"No, Baby. That's not it at all." he cocked his head to the side, leaning down far enough to look her in the eye. He took both her hands in his, holding them between them "Try looking at it from my perspective."

"Which is?" She looked up, biting her lip nervously.

"Jeanie, I am not a teenager. I don't feel comfortable pawing my girlfriend in a public place." Hikaru said hoping she wouldn't take that the wrong way. "Some things should be private."

"But you didn't want me here in your cabin. This is private. What else does that leave?" She pointed out, trying to ignore the teenager remark.

"There is no privacy onboard ship." He said. Since the computer kept track of every life form on the ship, privacy was a matter of a conscious effort on the part of the crew not to intrude on each other's lives. "Anyone could see you come and go from here. Anyone could check on your location with the ship's computer. Your father probably knows you are here right now."

"Leave my father out of it." Jimmi stated emphatically. "Why do you keep treating me like a kid?"

"Is that what I'm doing?"

"Yes. All the time." Jimmi said. "I already have three fathers. I don't need another one. If you can't treat me like an equal, then.... "

"Wait a minute. How do I not treat you like an equal?" he asked. What did she mean? He only treated her with respect and courtesy.

"You totally disregard my feelings." Jimmi said. He started to respond, but she stopped him. "Every time I try to tell you how I feel, you say I'll grow out of it or everyone goes through it at my age. Or I am just being silly. Can't you just listen to me?"

"Do I..." Sulu started to defend himself. But he stopped. She had a point. "I'm sorry. I just want to help you..."

She cut him off. "Well stop helping me so much. I can take care of myself. Thank you very much!"

"Jeanie, it was not my intention to undermine you." He said carefully. "But I do try to offer a different perspective."

"You make it sounds like I'm some kind of project. Are you looking for someone to control?" She demanded. Damn Star Fleet with its codes of personal conduct and its stupid different perspectives. "Maybe you think I'm not strong enough to stand up for myself?"

"To the contrary. Your strength is one of the things I love about you." Sulu couldn't believe she had said that. What did she really think of him? "Even when you are dead wrong."

"And you think I'm wrong now." She said quietly looking at the floor. "Damn it, Harry! Why do I care so much what you think?"

"I think..." he said. Jimmi looked up at him expectantly. "I think you're beautiful." He

was smiling at her and waiting patiently to see what she would say. He was very sexy standing there just inches from her, still holding her hands.

"That's a hell of a way to end a fight, Harry." She said shaking her head, but at least she was smiling. She took a deep breath and pulled one of her hands free to wipe a tear from her cheek. "Now what?"

"Come here." He led her to his bunk. They sat down facing each other. "I don't know about you, but I can't take this kind of arguing every time we see each other."

"I don't like the fighting either, but I love the way we make up." She smiled leaning forward.

"Wait." Hikaru smiled at her. "We're not done talking. Making love may end the argument, but it doesn't solve the problems."

"But it makes me feel better." She laid her hand on his knee.

"There's something we can agree on." He laughed. Turning more serious again, he said "But, I want to know exactly what you want from me, Jeanie."

"I thought that was obvious." Jimmi said sitting back. Her eyes were wide with surprise. Hikaru shook his head, so she explained. "I want to count on you. Harry, you are so... so.... solid."

"Now there's a description every man just longs to hear." He said sarcastically. "Not heroic or brilliant. Solid."

"You asked." Jimmi said, laughing at his response. "I don't know how to explain it. But all my life whenever I counted on something or someone it was somehow taken away from me. It doesn't make any sense, does it?"

"It makes some sense."

"So.... This is a two way connection." Jimmi said. She crossed her legs under her. "What do you want from me? Why do you even bother with me?"

"Bother with you?" He asked. He had spent a year trying not to think of her, trying to get on with his life. He felt like he had no choice but to bother with her. "Baby, I wish I could explain it. But I've told you things I've never told anyone else and I don't know why. And when you look at me the way you do...."

When he did not finish, she asked, "What?"

How could he explain it? She was doing it right now. Looking to him for the answers. Trusting him to take care of her. Her eyes full of trust and love. Sulu reached out and gently pushed a strand of her curly hair away from her cheek. "All I want to do is make you happy. You make me feel like we are the only 2 people in the galaxy."

"I love you." She explained

"I know." He smiled. "And that used to scare me."

"And now?" she reached over and traced the details of his jacket with here finger. She wanted to take it off him.

"I think I am getting used to the idea." he said as he uncrossed one of her legs, removed her shoe, and tossed it on the floor.

"What happened to your nonnegotiable rule?" She asked him suspiciously.

"There is something to be said for flexibility." He sighed. "And I just can't imagine

throwing you out of here right now."

Jimmi laughed as he kissed her neck. "It's a good thing I love you, Hikaru."

"I love you too, Jeanie."

It was getting late. Jimmi sat up and reached for her clothes. Harry reached out and stroked her back. He knew she had to go. She turned and smiled at him in the semi darkness. "I thought you were asleep."

"I ought to be. I've got to work in the morning." Sulu said. "Computer, bring lights up to fifty percent normal intensity."

Sulu sat up and reached for his pants. Jimmi was trying to locate her shoes. "Go back to sleep."

"I'll walk you home." he said putting his t-shirt on.

"It's not required." She said as she retrieved the errant shoe from under his desk.

"I've been recently reminded of the unwritten rules of relationships." Sulu said with a smile as he put his boots on. "Walking the young lady home falls under these rules."

Jimmi quickly checked the mirror. She wondered if her father would be able to tell what she and Harry had been up to. They left his cabin together.

"So there are rules?" Jimmi asked as they walked along.

"Evidently"

"Where did you hear these rules?"

"The first time, from my father." He said. "He had a whole list of rules about how a gentleman behaves towards a lady."

"So what else is on this list?" Jimmi asked. They stopped in the hall outside her father's cabin.

"I never heard the whole thing." He explained. He could still hear his father's deep gentle voice telling him to treat his dates like ladies. Not that he always listened. "His method was to bring up a new rule after I had broken it."

"So you weren't always a gentleman?" she giggled. It was such an outrageous notion. She had real trouble picturing him in high school. He claimed that he was such a different person back then.

"There is no such thing as a sixteen year old gentleman." he said. "Unless somebody's parents are around."

"I better go in." Jimmi said. But she didn't move.

He took her face in his hands and kissed her. "You better go in."

She sighed. "Goodnight, Harry."

"Goodnight, Jeanie."

Jimmi went in to the cabin, smiling to herself. She didn't see her father at first. He sat on the couch with a book. The couch was actually a standard crewman's bunk. McCoy had it installed the first time Jim Kirk had broken regulations to pick her up from high school. It was where she slept on the rare occasions when she spent the night on the ship. When she wasn't there, McCoy found it to be one of his favorite reading spots. He closed the book and looked up

at her.

"It's getting late." he said.

"Why are you waiting up, Dad?" Jimmi asked even though she had known he would.

"Old habits." he said. "Come sit down and tell me about your evening."

"Before we saw you, we had dinner." She sat down next to him. "You know about the fight. That lasted most of the evening. Then we made up and I came home. What else did you want to know?"

McCoy didn't really want details. He could make some educated guesses, but even those he didn't want to put into words. "How do things stand between you two now?"

"Well Dad." Jimmi sighed and the smile disappeared. "We're ok. Maybe better than ever."

"So why the long face?" he asked.

"I don't know Dad. I used to feel like I belong here. But now I feel like I am intruding."

Jimmi said. "So many things are changing."

"What kind of things?"

"When I used to visit, I felt at home. I guess because this is your world." She said slowly. "And James T. and Spock. In high school when I said home, I meant Enterprise."

"Not anymore?" McCoy asked.

"Now I'm in the way." Jimmi struggled to put her feelings into words. "I can't make my own life on Earth and still be the Princess when I come here."

"Did Hikaru say you were in the way?"

"No Dad." Jimmi shook her head. "I didn't talk to him about this. We have so many other things to get straight."

"You are pretty serious about him, right?" McCoy asked. She nodded, smiling. "So isn't this the kind of thing you should talk to him about? It sounds very basic to me."

"Maybe after our talk tonight, maybe I can talk to him about this." Jimmi sighed. "If I can get it straight in my own mind first. If everything doesn't change again."

"Maybe you are the one who is changing, Dear." McCoy suggested.

"You aren't actually going to admit I've grown up?" Jimmi smiled teasingly. "Are you Dad?"

"Well." He laughed. "Maybe you are moving in that direction."

"Sick bay to Dr. McCoy."

McCoy went to his desk to answer the comline. "McCoy here."

"Doctor." Bobby Lopez responded. "The repair crew had an accident with the plasma injector. I've got five crew members with third degree burns."

"On my way." McCoy did not even bother to explain to Jimmi. He just called goodnight as he ran out the door.

Jimmi sat on her bed and thought about her time on Enterprise. Hidden in the draw under the bed she had kept her old worn stuffed animals. They were the only things left from her childhood, from her first home. Jimmi opened the drawer and took them out. Two small teddy bears, the white rabbit, and the tiger. She had always carried her mother's silver brush and comb with her. But the animals stayed here. After her first visit to the Enterprise, she had left them

there to keep her place in her father's life.

She knew even then that it had been a silly idea. Her father never knew the animals were there. But when she had first come on board, they had meant home to her. The four little stuffed animals had grown very frowsy. She would take them to her small crowded room above the Jade Palace. Jimmi placed them in her duffle. On second thought, she replaced the white rabbit in the drawer. Then she went to bed.