

Lt. Commander Uhura touched the door signal outside Sulu's quarters. He called for her to come in. She found him laying on his bunk, hands behind his head. On his computer screen played a video of Sulu and Jimmi at the beach in San Francisco. It had been a cold and windy day. The hood of Jimmi's sweat shirt kept blowing off.

"Computer, freeze image." Sulu said as Uhura came in. He looked up at her and asked, "So are you going to tell me how stupid I am?"

"You don't need me for that." Uhura said sitting on the corner of his bed by his feet. "But if you are going to get a reputation as a womanizer, I thought I'd do my part."

"Thanks a lot." Sulu laughed, sitting up. "But I thought I was getting a reputation as a barroom brawler."

"Depends who you talk to." Uhura said with a shrug of her shoulders. "But it definitely is the talk of the ship. And the tale is getting taller with the telling."

"Great." Sulu said drawing the word out. He shook his head. "I should have walked away."

"True." Uhura agreed. "What do you suppose Jimmi would have done?"

Sulu looked over at the still image of her face. Her curly brown hair was going in all direction from the wind. He remembered how much she had complained about trying to brush it that evening. But in the computer image she was laughing, her eyes sparkling.

"She would have laughed in his face." Sulu said. He knew what Uhura was getting at. Jimmi would be the first one to tell him that his protective attitude was old fashioned. She had shared a few choice words about it before. His door signal sounded again. "Come in."

"Did you two want to be alone?" Chekov teased from the doorway. Sulu grabbed his pillow and threw it at Chekov. He caught it and threw it back as he came into the room. Chekov sat down at the desk, the only seat left in the room.

"So, how did it go?" Sulu asked.

"It could have been worse." Chekov said. "I believe Dr. McCoy was already aware that Dr. Lopez had some problems with his attitude."

"I know he was." Uhura agreed. "He asked me about it indirectly a couple of months ago when we were first at Starbase Sixty Eight."

"I hate sitting here doing nothing." Sulu said. He got up and started pacing around the room.

"And the Captain knows it." Uhura said. "Relax Sulu, nothing is going to come of this."

"I'm not worried about that. Worse case, there's a reprimand on my record." Sulu said. "But I know the Captain is going to bring this up to me. I probably will have to explain something to Dr. McCoy. And worst of all, Lopez will probably get nothing but sympathy."

"Oh I wouldn't worry about Bobby if I was you." Uhura said. Sulu and Chekov both looked at her questioningly. "He's been aboard for a year now. If any woman didn't have his number before this, she will now."

"Bobby?" Chekov laughed. Uhura usually used rank or mister for a crew member she didn't know well.

"A boy's name for a boy." Uhura shrugged. It dawned on Uhura that she should go talk to Christine. Perhaps she would have an idea of how to educate Bobby Lopez. After all Chapel

worked with him. She stood up. "I've got to go. See you later."

"What was that all about?" Chekov asked after she left.

"I don't know." Sulu said distractedly. "Damn, I wish I could go to the gym and work off some of this energy."

\*\*\*\*\*

Lt. Commander Uhura went to sick bay to see Nurse Chapel. She was also a Lt. Commander now and had been working on finishing her course work for Starfleet medical certification for the last several years. It was the long way around to a medical degree, but Chapel's massive practical experience would certainly be an asset to her when she officially became a doctor.

"Christine." Uhura said walking up to the nurse's station in sick bay. It was little more than a duty station in the corner, but it was the head nurse's office. "Do you have a minute?"

"Sure." Chapel looked up. "Sit down. I bet I know what this is about."

"I'm sure you've heard the story." Uhura said. "After all this place is scuttlebutt central."

"Yes, I heard. But you were there so give me the real story." Christine said. "I have heard so many versions I don't know what to believe."

"Believe the simplest version." Uhura said. "One punch. There was an insult to Jimmi but neither Sulu or Chekov will say exactly what."

Dr. Lopez walked slowly into sick bay. He was on duty and just finishing up the record keeping involved in all the new personnel that had reported to the Enterprise over the last several days. He glanced up from the computer padd he had been studying.

"Hello ladies." Lopez smiled.

"Excuse me, Lieutenant?" Uhura said standing up. "Is that how you address a superior officer, Mister?"

"Sorry, Commander." Lopez's smile disappeared. "It would seem that I am running up against Mr. Sulu's friends a lot this evening."

"Is that what you think this is about?" Uhura asked incredulously. "Who has more friends on board?"

"Well, Mr. Sulu is the one who engaged in conduct unbecoming an officer." Lopez complained. He still didn't understand why everyone was angry at him. "That's what they call it, isn't it?"

"Have you ever heard the expression 'an officer and a gentleman' Lt. Lopez?" Uhura asked. He nodded. "You would do well to attempt to live up to that old fashioned concept."

"I don't understand." Lopez shook his head, "He hit me. Why am I getting all the grief?"

"What did you expect of Sulu?" Christine asked him seriously. "You insulted the man's girlfriend to his face?"

"Which one?" Lopez laughed.

Dr. McCoy's voice on the com line interrupted them. "Nurse Chapel, ask Dr. Lopez to step into my office when you see him."

"Yes Doctor." Chapel answered. Lopez looked at his feet and hoped McCoy wanted to discuss the new personnel records. "He's here now, Sir."

Dr. Bobby Lopez took a deep breath and went to Dr. McCoy's office. It was a small room

with just the desk and a couple of chairs. There were several large computer screens on the wall so that McCoy could readily review the condition of any or all patients in sick bay.

"You wanted me, Dr. McCoy?" Lopez asked.

"Come in Lopez and sit down." McCoy was sitting at his desk. Lopez sat in the chair nearest the office door. "We need to talk about this incident in the officers club."

"Since it was Mr. Sulu who hit me, shouldn't you be talking to him, Sir?" Dr. Lopez asked sitting stiffly in his chair.

"I have talked to Mr. Sulu and to Mr. Chekov too." McCoy said. He leaned back in his chair looking at the younger man questioningly. He wanted Lopez to be open in their discussion, but McCoy was having trouble feeling friendly towards him. "I would like to hear your version."

"Well, Lt. Chekov and I were in the officers club." Bobby started. "We were having a couple of beers and talking about Starbase 68. I had met several women there and Chekov mentioned a woman he'd like to see again. Then Sulu and Uhura came in laughing about some bet they made. She went off to talk to some girlfriend. We were talking. Sulu said he was leaving. Then he hit me."

"Why?"

"I don't understand it either, Dr. McCoy." Bobby said honestly. "We were just talking. I was telling Sulu how much I admire him."

"Do you?" McCoy asked. "Admire him? Why?"

"Well, Dr. McCoy." Lopez said carefully. "To put it simply he has more women on this ship than he knows what to do with."

"And you admire that, Doctor?" McCoy asked

"Sure, I just don't understand why he's angry at me." Lopez said innocently. "I may offer a little competition, but there are plenty of women to go around."

"Mister, you've got to start thinking with your brain and not with other parts of your anatomy." McCoy said. "Lt. Commander Sulu is well respected by the women on this ship because he respects them and the jobs they are doing. And if you don't start doing the same, you will not last long on this ship! You got that, Lieutenant?"

"Yes Sir!" Dr. Lopez answered quickly. Dr. McCoy didn't pull rank often, but when he did it was a good idea to pay attention.

"There will be no charges of any kind filed regarding this incident." McCoy left Lopez very little choice. "Agreed, Lieutenant?"

"Yes Sir."

"Dismissed." McCoy said crisply. Lopez stood and turned to leave. As he reached the door, McCoy added quietly. "As your commanding officer I don't care what you do with your free time. But as a father, stay away from my daughter."

Dr. Lopez left McCoy's office. For the first time in a long time he was seriously considering career options other than Starfleet. He finished his shift without talking to any one else. When he was done he decided against hiding in his cabin and went to the gym to work out.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Mr. Sulu." A voice came over the comline "Report to the Captain's quarters."

"Sulu here. I'm on my way." He replied and quickly left his own cabin. This would not be a good day to keep the Captain waiting. He reached the Captain's cabin on deck eight in less than two minutes.

Kirk, as usual sat at his desk. "Sit down, Sulu." Sulu did without comment. "Dr. Lopez will not be pressing any charges. There will be an incident report without reprimand logged on your service record."

"Thank you, Sir." Sulu said and waited for the Captain to proceed.

Kirk was annoyed. He wasn't exactly sure how to handle this situation. It was a feeling Jim Kirk did not like. "Ok Sulu, out with it. What were you thinking? Is this how you plan to conduct yourself when your private life intersects your professional one?"

"No Sir. It was not my plan." Sulu admitted. "Perhaps I wasn't thinking at all."

"Perhaps?!" Kirk asked angrily. "You go on for years making all the right decisions, always mindful of the consequences of your actions. Are you planning to let your feelings for Jean Marie throw all that hard work out the airlock?"

"No Sir."

"Then you better shape up, Mister." Kirk said relying heavily on standard lecture material. "And get your mind back on business."

"Yes Sir."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"Captain, I would not want to put you in a difficult position....." Sulu started slowly.

"Let me worry about my position." Kirk cut him off. The Captain studied Sulu before asking matter-of-factly. "You love her?"

"Yes Sir."

"Are you willing to give up your career for her?"

"I hope it never comes to that, Sir." Sulu said. Of course he had considered that possibility, but Jimmi had said she would never ask him to leave Starfleet. She said she understood how he felt about it.

"It very well could." Kirk said. After all he had faced a similar choice once. He had never fully recovered from it. "Believe me."

"I'll have to make that decision if and when it comes." Sulu said. This wasn't the easiest conversation he had ever had with Kirk. "I don't see that it really has to come to that. Jimmi knows what a life in Starfleet means."

"Well..." Kirk wasn't sure he agreed with that! "Regardless what the future holds. I expect you to live up to the proper code of conduct of a command officer. This is the last time I want you in here for this kind of a problem. Clear?"

"Clear Captain."

"Good." Kirk said. He turned his attention back to his computer screen. "Now get out of here."

"Yes Sir." Sulu got up to leave. At the Captain's door he turned and asked. "Restrictions?"

"Lifted." Kirk said without looking up.

"Thank you, Sir." Sulu said and left. Once out the door he let out a sigh of relief. On

the other side of that door, Kirk leaned back in his chair and relaxed. He was also glad to have that meeting over. What Sulu needed now was to work off some energy.

Lt. Commander Sulu walked into the main gym. As usual, it was being well used. The gym consisted of several rooms. One main floor which was used for exercise classes and team competitions. There were two running track. One on the main floor and one suspended above the main floor about three meters. There were several rooms that could be used for individual competitions such as hand ball, racquet ball, or duello. There was also a weight room, training room, and of course locker rooms.

A martial arts class was in progress on the main floor. Several people were using the upper jogging track. Sulu was not in the mood to be sociable. He just wanted to work up a good sweat and get his thoughts straight. After all Sulu had a lot to think about. So he headed for the weight room.

There were several people using the weights when Sulu walked in. Dr. Lopez was one of them. Sulu considered turning around and walking out. But Kirk was right. He had to remember he was a command officer. It was not required that he like everyone on the ship, but it was required that he be able to work with everyone. After all no one was assigned to a starship that didn't know his or her job well. Lopez was working with the smaller hand weights, so Sulu went to the other side of the room to start his workout.

Sulu was concentrating on his weight lifting and did not notice people finishing up their workouts and hurrying from the room. He had finished his first set of repetition when he looked up and realized he and Lopez were alone in the weight room. They looked at each other.

"Lopez." Sulu acknowledged him.

"Sulu." Lopez responded with equal formal politeness.

Sulu sighed. It was obviously up to him. He put the weight he was working with back and looked at the young doctor. "Listen, Lopez. I want to apologize for the punch at the bar. I am a little sensitive when it comes to Ms. McCoy."

Lopez studied Sulu for a minute. He wondered if Sulu had been ordered to apologize. He shrugged and said "Don't worry about it. That wasn't the first punch I've taken over a woman."

Sulu could not say he was surprised. He offered a little advise. "Perhaps you should be more careful about what you say in bars."

"You are not going to warn me to stay away from her, like her father did?" Lopez scoffed. He had done his part. He let Sulu off the hook. Why couldn't Sulu just leave it there?

"Did he?" Sulu asked with interest and amusement.

"Yes." Lopez said with some irritation. "And several people have implied that you and Jimmi are exclusive. True?"

"True." Sulu reached for the towel he had brought in with him and wiped some of the sweat off his face. This was the longest conversation he and Lopez had ever had.

"Then, I am sorry." Lopez said truthfully. The concept of fidelity had always escaped him but he could respect it. "I don't generally intrude on private property."

"Property?" Sulu shook his head. Lopez had no idea how lucky he was that Jimmi hadn't heard that remark. She considered some of Sulu's ideas about women old fashioned. She would

consider Lopez's ideas criminal. "Doctor. You would be wise to reconsider your evaluation of the situation."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean a crew member who can not learn from his mistakes will not last long on this ship." Sulu took his towel and left the weight room.

Sulu breathed a sigh of relief as he walked down the hall. He felt he was starting to get a hold of the situation. Everything he had been dreading had happened. Dr. McCoy had warned him rather ominously not to hurt his daughter. Everyone on board felt at liberty to comment on the relationship including the Captain. And worst of all, he had let his feelings for Jimmi interfere with his ability to function as a command officer.

He couldn't help but smile to himself. All that had happened and yet he was still on Enterprise. He was still on command track. As a matter of fact, the short fight with Lopez had been a release to the tension he was feeling about Jimmi. He had been keeping too tight a leash on his feelings. All he had to do was relax and do his job.

Of course he still had to prove to Captain Kirk that he could handle it. He had let himself get too involved with the children on Tellus, but that had served Kirk's purpose. And Sulu could not put a price on the insight that mission had brought. Because of the children of Tellus he and McCoy had been able to talk. Because of that mission he understood Kirk's methods of command better. More importantly he understood his own priorities better. Now he was no longer worried about how to handle Jimmi and his career. It might not be easy, but Hikaru Sulu had never looked for the easy way.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Enterprise had left Starbase 12 almost a week ago. Sulu stopped at his cabin on his way to lunch to call Jimmi. He had asked Ensign Posner to make the connection as he was leaving the bridge. For once he didn't worry about what he was going to say to her. Except for classified information he didn't feel any need to censor himself. When Jimmi appeared she was looking off past the view screen.

"I'll just be a minute." She said to someone there. She turned and looked at the screen. She smiled with delight. "Harry!"

"Did I catch you in the middle of something?" He asked. He couldn't help smiling either. He had been smiling to himself a lot this last week.

"We were working on those twentieth century news tapes I told you about. But I can take a break." Jimmi said. Subspace time was precious. No one called without a reason. "I'm glad you called, but didn't I just see you?"

"I'm not allowed to miss you?" He laughed briefly. Jimmi did not answer, but she did not have to. Her delight was obvious. "You know, I have some leave time saved up."

"No, I didn't know."

"I thought maybe you could meet me somewhere and we could spend a little vacation time together." He grinned.

"Well," She hesitated. "I have a couple more weeks of this internship. Right after I'm done I start graduate history classes and my new job at SFU. I have to be there before the term

starts for orientation and some training."

"You took the job." He said enthusiastically. "Your Dad must be thrilled."

"Well," Jimmi laughed and shrugged. "I haven't told him yet."

"Jimmi!"

"I'm going to tell him." She laughed. "I just haven't gotten around to it yet. Anyway I won't have enough free time to get away until at least Christmas."

"Ok, Christmas then." he nodded.

"Really?"

"Really." He nodded again, smiling. She looked and sounded so happy. It made him feel good to give her something she wanted. "But we'll have to leave the exact plans flexible. I don't know how far away the Enterprise will be then."

"I don't care how far away you are." Jimmi laughed. It was too good to be true. She would travel to the edge of the galaxy to be with him. "We'll split the difference and meet somewhere in the middle. Just let me know."

"I will." He promised. Sulu sighed and turned more serious. "I've been thinking about you and about me. About us, Jeanie."

"Oh?" Jimmi asked. She held her breath, waiting. This was the real reason for his call. But it couldn't be too bad, they had just made plans for Christmas. "So what have you been thinking Harry?"

"Well, I think we can beat the odds." Sulu spoke slowly and carefully. He stared at her image intently. "It won't be easy. But I think I can have a good relationship with you and still have the career I want in Starfleet."

"You don't think I'll side track you?" She asked.

"Side track?"

"You know." Jimmi did not really want to get into what her father said, but she wanted Hikaru's answer. "Ruin your chances at getting a command."

"Who told you that?"

"It doesn't matter." Jimmi said. "What matters is what you think about it."

"What matters is what we think. You and me." Sulu said. The signal on his console lit up. "And I'm not worried. How about you?"

"I think we can make this work." She smiled. "But then I always did."

"Time's up." He told her. "I'm sorry, but I've got to go."

"I understand." She nodded. Jimmi had been dealing with subspace time limits since high school. "I love you. Be careful."

"Always." He grinned. "I love you too. And Jeanie...."

"Yes?"

"Tell your father!"

"Yes Sir!" She laughed. The connection terminated.

*The End*