

After a couple hours sleep Lt. Commander Gonzoles was feeling much better. She stepped out of the sonic shower and put on her robe. Smiling to herself, she brushed her long black hair. She sighed and glanced at the time. Tomas would soon be taking his lunch break.

"What to wear..." Rosita spoke softly to herself. She considered and rejected several outfits. She decided on a simple sleeveless shift. It was the light blue of a summer sky with wild flowers scattered across the skirt. Rosita looked at herself in the mirror. "Pretty but casual. Definitely not too much."

Gonzoles picked up her novel and sat down to wait. But she had trouble concentrating on the book. Any time now he would be there. She was not used to waiting for a man. Trying not to watch the time, Rosita got up and wandered around her quarters. She uncovered the painting on her easel that she was currently working on. The clashing primary colors of an Aurkainan fire all struck her as jarring and ugly. There was no point in working on that now. She recovered it. Where was he?

She lit the candles on her dresser. They reminded her of her mother on the altar of her church. It had not always been easy to be the oldest daughter of the village priest. But Rosita missed her mother's gentle ways and insightful advice. She idly played with the liquid wax that pooled below the flames and looked at the various pictures of her family that she had on her wall. Tomas should have arrived by now.

Finally she gave up waiting and sat down at her desk. "Computer." She demanded with some irritation. "What is the location of Lt. Commander Tomas Smith?"

"Lt. Commander Tomas Smith is not on board the Excelsior." The computer responded.

"Not on board?" Gonzoles asked. "When did he leave? And how?"

"Lt. Commander Smith logged out on Shuttlecraft Sir Isaac Newton III at seventeen hundred hours." The computer said.

"Why?" Gonzoles asked herself.

"Lt. Commander Smith's orders were logged by Captain Sulu at--"

"I wasn't talking to you." Gonzoles cut off the computer. "Computer, display Captain's log for this duty shift."

"Level seven security code required."

"Authorization Gonzoles, beta, uno, quatro, verde." Gonzoles said. The text of Sulu's duty log appeared on her screen. After reading the log, she accessed the navigation station to check on Excelsior's location. They had withdrawn from the ion storm and were monitoring from a safe distance.

"Computer." Gonzoles said. "Location of Captain Sulu?"

"Captain Sulu is in dining hall three."

"Location Mr. Chekov?"

"Commander Chekov is in dining hall three."

"Who is in command on the bridge?" Gonzoles asked.

"Lt. David Ellis is presently in command on the main bridge."

"Ellis?" Gonzoles said. He had only been promoted to lieutenant a few months earlier. "That's a first."

"Incorrect." The computer said. "Lt. David Ellis has been in command of the bridge on one previous duty shift."

"Never mind." Gonzoles started for the door. She stopped suddenly just inside the door and turned to her closet to get a fresh uniform.

As Gonzoles was on her way to dining hall three, she was stopped by Dr. Patrick. "Hey Rosey, aren't you going the wrong way?"

"Wrong way?" Gonzoles squinted at him.

"The gym is in that general direction." Pat pointed behind her. "I know I'm late, but I didn't think you'd give up on me that quick."

"I'm sorry Pat." Gonzoles said. "I wasn't even thinking about running tonight. I was just going to check in with the Captain about this ion storm."

"I'm surprised he didn't send you on this mission." Pat said. "According to my bridge spies Tomas suggested you for the second shuttle, but Sulu said no."

"Bridge spies?" Gonzoles laughed and pretended not to be concerned about what he just said. "What about you? Why didn't you go along?"

"It seemed routine enough." Pat shrugged. "And both Shimerman and Caruso needed to get some away team experience."

"What made you think it was so routine?" Gonzoles grinned.

"If it was going to be really exciting, Sulu and / or Chekov would have gone." Pat winked at her. "Don't they always save the best for themselves?"

"I guess they do." Gonzoles sighed. "Privileges of rank."

"So, you're not going to run tonight?"

"I don't know, Pat." Gonzoles shrugged. "Maybe later."

When Gonzoles walked into dining hall three, Captain Sulu and Mr. Chekov were sharing a table. They were obviously finished with their meal. Each had a steaming cup in front of him. Gonzoles had already eaten. She wanted to march up to the table and demand to know why Sulu had not sent her on the rescue mission. But she already knew.

Gonzoles forced herself to walk up to their table slowly. She could hear the Captain talking as she approached. "So Jimmi walks in and finds Brian sitting quietly in the corner trying to color his hair with a black marker."

"Why?" Chekov laughed.

"Apparently he wanted to look more like his big brother." Sulu explained with a smile.

"So was Harry flattered?" Chekov finished his coffee.

"Harry was mad." Sulu laughed. "It was his marker."

"Excuse me, Captain." Gonzoles said. "Could I have a minute?"

"Sure Gonzoles." Sulu was still grinning when he looked up at her. "Sit down."

"I believe I will check in on the bridge." Chekov got up after Gonzoles sat down.

"Give the boy some room to breath, Pavel." Sulu looked up at his first officer standing next to the table. "He'll have to do it himself sometime. You want to ruin him?"

"I wish to check the sensors and the position of the storm." Chekov taped the table with his finger. As he walked away he added. "I am sure Ellis can handle sitting and waiting."

"All right, Gonzoles." Sulu turned his attention to her. "What's on your mind?"

"This morning, Sir." Gonzoles said. Captain Sulu sipped his coffee and waited for her to

continue. "I just wanted to apologize, Captain."

"Did you come to me for absolution, Gonzoles?"

"No Sir." Gonzoles said. "I made a mistake and I will take whatever consequences come from that. It will not happen again."

"Which mistake are we talking about?" Sulu asked.

She studied Sulu for a minute, not sure exactly what he was asking her. "I should have realized that I might not be the best choice for first shift today. There are officers in my staff that did not go to Risa last night."

"Uh huh." Sulu nodded.

Gonzoles waited for Sulu to say something more. When he did not, she almost got up to leave. Finally she sighed and asked. "Is there another mistake that I am not seeing?"

"You've been in Starfleet for quite awhile now." Sulu observed. "Worked your way up to second officer. You will probably captain your own ship before you are through. A model officer."

"I hope so, Sir." Gonzoles did not see what he was getting at.

"It is a mistake, Commander." Sulu said. "To think that you are no longer capable of making a mistake."

Gonzoles stared at him. She leaned on the table between them. "Am I that arrogant, Captain?"

"Arrogance is something a command officer must guard against." Sulu said. "It has been the downfall of more than one. Remember that you are human, Rosita."

"And humans make mistakes?"

"Yes." Sulu nodded. "Your error in judgement was minor. But you know that as situations change, you must change also."

"Sir." Gonzoles started slowly. "I can explain."

"I am not asking for an explanation, Gonzoles." Sulu assured her. "The balance between your professional and personal life is one you must find yourself."

"Captain." Gonzoles said. "I have never seen you let your personal life influence your command."

"I'm glad it doesn't show." Sulu smiled. "But you are assuming that influence is always negative. It is not."

"Perhaps after you found the balance, Captain."

"It is an on going struggle."

"Yes Sir." Gonzoles nodded. She wanted to ask more, but she wasn't sure how or what to ask. And she was not sure just how much she really wanted to know about the Captain's private life. So she changed the subject. "I see that you gave Briscoe command of one of the shuttles."

"Yes." Sulu nodded. "She's been doing a good job on the bridge. It's about time she got some command experience under her belt."

"Yes Sir." Gonzoles said. "I am sure she is grateful for the opportunity."

"Anything else, Gonzoles?"

"No Sir." Gonzoles got up and left the dining hall. She was on her way to the gym for her evening run, but when she stepped into the turbo lift she changed her mind. "Bridge."

Lt. Ellis was in the command chair in the center of the bridge. Gonzoles walked around the upper circle to the science station. Commander Chekov was looking over Lt. Jacoby's shoulder. He straightened up when Gonzoles approached. "Aren't you off duty, Gonzoles?"

"Technically, Mr. Chekov." Gonzoles smiled. "Aren't you?"

"Technically." Chekov returned her smile.

"Have we heard anything from the shuttles?" Gonzoles asked.

"No." Chekov said. "The storm is starting to move and to dissipate. But communications are still not possible. There is nothing we can do but wait."

"I know." Gonzoles nodded. "Do you have an estimate of how long?"

"If nothing changes, five or six hours." Chekov said. "But you know how unpredictable ion storms are. I plan to get a little sleep. You should do the same."

Commander Chekov started towards the turbo lift. Gonzoles followed him. After the turbo lift doors closed behind them, Gonzoles asked. "Sir, may I ask you a personal question?"

"You may ask." Chekov smiled. "Deck ten."

"How do you manage a family and a career in Starfleet?" Gonzoles asked.

"I manage." Chekov shrugged. "I never had any plan. I never intended to marry. I just handle each situation as it comes."

"I see."

"What are you concerned about, Rosita?"

"About making a mistake."

"Everybody makes mistakes." Chekov said. The turbo lift door opened on deck ten. Chekov stepped off. "Some of the best things that ever happened to me started out as mistakes."

The turbo lift doors closed. Gonzoles went home and went back to bed.