

The Excelsior dropped out of warp at the coordinates that Captain Uhura had sent to Captain Sulu. But the Artful Dodger was nowhere in sight. Sulu ordered full sensor sweeps, but they revealed nothing. They had only to wait an hour before the Dodger dropped out of warp and pulled along side of the Excelsior.

"Captain Sulu." Commander Rand reported from the communications station. "I have the Artful Dodger."

"On screen." Sulu ordered.

Captain Uhura appeared on the main screen. "Captain Sulu, I need your opinion on something. Can you beam over here so we can talk?"

"Of course, I'll be right there." Sulu said. He turned to Chekov. "Keep a watchful eye. I don't know what Uhura has, but she said it was important. I don't need any surprises."

"Aye Captain." Chekov said.

Sulu beamed over to the Dodger. Captain Uhura was waiting for him.

"Permission to come aboard."

"Granted." She answered automatically. She took him to the small conference room. Commander T'Penn and Ensign Riveria stood when they entered. The four officers sat around the table before Captain Uhura explained. "I've come across some information about the Cardassians from an independent source. When I questioned his sincerity and motivation, he suggested I talk to you."

Sulu raised his eyebrow. "Who is this source?"

"Matthew Brady." Uhura said.

"Do you have him in custody?" Sulu asked hopefully.

"No, I don't have him." Captain Uhura seemed irritated. "He disappeared out from under our noses."

Sulu nodded. He knew how that felt. "What happened?"

"Mr. Brady approached Ensign Riveria while we were docked at Starbase Eight." Uhura said. Sulu turned his attention on the thin young Ensign. Victor Riveria forced himself not to squirm under the Captain's watchful eye.

"I was on shore leave and had gotten into a game of fan-tan which Mr. Brady was one of the other players." Mr. Riveria explained self-consciously. "As the game broke up he approached me, saying he had information regarding the building up of arms on the Cardasian borders. And he wondered what it was worth."

"How did he do at the game?" Sulu asked.

"Sir?"

"Did he win or lose?" Sulu asked. "Was he in need of funds?"

Mr. Riveria thought for a moment. "I believe he was winning when the game broke up, Sir. But I don't know how much. He did not leave his coin on the table."

"And he left the table with you?"

"Yes Sir."

"What are you thinking, Captain?" Uhura asked.

"In my experience, Matthew Brady's motives are rarely clear or obvious." Sulu said. "From this report, so far, I'd say the chances are good that Brady was using Mr.

Riveria to keep someone else at bay. Someone who wouldn't want any Starfleet intervention."

"So you would disregard his information?" Uhura asked.

"Not out of hand. He knows better than to waste Starfleet's time." Sulu said.

"Mr. Riveria, who else was in this game?"

"Two other officers from our ship, Lt. Allen and Lt. Steinoff, and an old Tuscan man. I didn't get his name." Ensign Riveria answered.

"Both officers of higher rank and yet he chose you." Sulu noted. "What happened then?"

"I told Brady if he had any information he would have to speak to the Captain." Mr. Riveria said. "I reported what had happened to Commander T'Penn who was on duty. She came on the base to talk to Brady."

Commander T'Penn continued the report. "Mr. Brady told me of the increased arms production on the Cardasian worlds of Macco Dyad and Lius Trine. He had no verification, but told us that you could verify that he was a man of his word."

"Did you talk to him, Captain?" Sulu asked.

"Only briefly." Captain Uhura said. "I was returning to the ship when I saw T'Penn and Riveria talking to Brady. I invited him to come aboard the ship while I contacted you regarding his story. He didn't like that idea and said he must take care of some business first. I sent Mr. Riveria with him."

"And?"

"I lost him, Sir." Mr. Riveria hated reporting his failure to Captain Sulu, but he had no way around it. He had only been aboard the Artful Dodger for eight months and had hoped that the next time he saw Demora's father he would, at least, have a good record.

"How Ensign?"

"We went to a bar where he spoke to the owner regarding a debt he owed. Promising he would settle up soon." Victor reported. "I never saw who had the hypo-spray, but I felt it on my neck. I woke up about an hour later."

"I lost him too, the first time." Sulu reassured the young ensign. He turned to the first officer. "Commander T'Penn what did he say, exactly?"

"I recorded his statement on my tricorder." T'Penn said and brought it up on the computer. "It is audio only."

"Bless your Vulcan heart." Sulu said. Commander T'Penn just stared at him unsure how to react. Captain Uhura tried not to smile, that had sounded an awful lot like Sulu's father-in-law talking. "Play it, Commander." She did.

"All I know is they have increased production of weapons systems on Macco Dyad and of war ships on Lius Trine. Both are Cardasian worlds, right? So is it worth something to your Captain...like maybe a ride to New Freedom, or enough money to get there?" Brady's voice was distinctive, deep and calm.

"We will need verification of these reports." T'Penn said.

"I have nothing more than the eyewitness reports of people I trust. But I also have

business obligations that must be met. So I have little time...If you don't trust me, my Vulcan friend, ask Captain Sulu of Excelsior. He will tell you I am a man of my word."

"I will." T'Penn said. "Here is Captain Uhura. This is Matthew Brady. He has information regarding Cardasian activities. But offers only Captain Sulu's word to vouch for his character."

"You know Captain Sulu, Mr. Brady?"

"A deceptively polite man." Brady said.

"Mr. Brady, why don't you enjoy my hospitality on my ship, while I contact Captain Sulu." Uhura said.

"I'd love to Captain. But I have a few minor business meetings I must take care of first." Brady said. "Perhaps I could meet you in about an hour?"

"Mr. Riveria, why don't you help Mr. Brady with his business. Then bring him aboard."

"Aye Captain."

"That is all there is." Commander T'Penn said closing the audio record.

"I would look for him at Space Station New Freedom." Sulu said. "Have you been able to verify his information at all?"

"There are only rumors." Captain Uhura said. "Perhaps your Mr. Brady heard them."

"Perhaps he started them." Sulu offered. "He was looking for a ride. How did he arrive at Starbase Eight?"

"The records have him traveling on a transport from Starbase Eighteen only three days before we talked to him." Uhura said. "A round about way to get to New Freedom."

"Indeed." Captain Sulu agreed. "Any idea how he got off Starbase Eight?"

"Three private ships left the base while we were waiting to hear from Mr. Riveria." Uhura said. "We've located and searched two. The last has disappeared."

"As if cloaked?" Sulu asked. Uhura shrugged. "What other conclusion was there? "What's the missing ship called?"

"The Tray-dah, Sir." T'Penn answered. "But if he had a ship, why was he looking for a ride?"

"Good question. We'll have to ask him when we catch up to him." Sulu said. He looked directly at Uhura. "Captain, can we talk?"

Captain Uhura looked at her two officers "Dismissed." They stood and left. "What is it, Hikaru?"

"Were you just on shore leave?"

"No." Captain Uhura admitted. "I was conferring with Commander Gawaski regarding reports of Klingon/Cardassian skirmishes. You saw the reports?"

"Yes. But why would the Klingons deny that anything happened?" Sulu asked.

"I don't know." Uhura said. "Gawaski believes they are attempting to conquer the Cardasians to gain control of their power source. Thus voiding the treaty."

"I don't know that I would trust Gawaski's political assessment." Sulu said.

"I know what you mean. I've heard his opinion that we should just let the

Klingons and the Cardassians battle it out." Uhura said shaking her head. "He then advocates that we go in and take over whoever is left."

"Everyone's heard it from him." It irked Sulu. How could a Starfleet officer advocate taking over a culture by force? It went against everything that Starfleet and the Federation stood for. "He must have something personal at stake. No matter. Did he have anything more than what reported through official channels?"

"Just details. The skirmishes seem minor to me. They are not about power sources. They are about border settlements. Agricultural settlements at that." Uhura said. "And you know how the Klingons are."

"Yes, they don't have much use for farmers." Sulu agreed. "But they do hate to give up territory."

"True." Uhura said. "Have you gotten anything more?"

"No, but the last time that Matthew Brady told me where he was going then disappeared, I followed. And I found the answers to my questions by doing so." Captain Sulu said. "Perhaps we should go check it out."

"Both of us?" Uhura asked.

"You go in, I'll hang out of sensor range and wait. I have not had a run in with him in over four years, so he used my name for a reason. I'd like to find out why." Sulu suggested. "Unless you have a better idea?"

"No, that sounds good to me." Uhura stood. "I'd also like to know what this is all about. Besides I haven't been to New Freedom in years."

"Good, in the meantime I'll call Mike at the Fly By Night." Sulu said. "He may know who Brady's been doing business with these days."

"Matthew Brady gets around." Captain Uhura commented as they walked through the corridors of her ship.

Sulu followed her to the transporter room. "How is Ensign Riveria working out?"

"Fine." Captain Uhura said. "He's eager and needs to learn to think things through a little more. But basically he's a good officer. I didn't know you knew him."

"I don't." Sulu said as he stepped up on the pad. "He's a friend of Dee's."

"A friend?" Uhura smiled. Sulu shrugged. "Energize."

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Captain Sulu returned to his own bridge. They waited while the Artful Dodger left the area. Sulu took the time to inform Chekov what had transpired on the Dodger. "Set course for Space Station New Freedom. Warp two."

"Warp two, Aye." Lt. Kim nodded and sent the huge ship on its way.

"ETA Five hours twenty three minutes." Lt. Commander Gonzoles reported.

"Commander Rand, get me the Fly By Night and put it through to my office. Gonzoles you have the bridge." Captain Sulu ordered. With a jerk of his head he said. "Mr. Chekov, with me."

The conversation with Mike was quick and unproductive. Brady had been there but Mike knew nothing of his business. He had met associates but Mike did not know names. And he knew nothing of the ships in port. The only thing he had to offer was that

one of the people Brady had met was a Klingon woman.

"What does Brady want this time?" Chekov asked. He sat easily in the chair in front of the Captain's desk. When they were alone and at ease the two old friends tended to drop all trappings of rank.

"I don't know." Sulu said. "But he probably left on a ship called the Tray-dah."

"The name suggest a Della Mir ship." Chekov observed. "They don't seem to care much about someone's politics when outfitting a ship for them."

"They also don't seem to mind not recording all systems on a vessel either." Sulu added.

"Such as a cloaking device?" Chekov asked.

"Brady doesn't like to be without one." Sulu said. "And he seems to favor ships from the Della Mir Community."

"I will see what I can find out about the Tray-dah." Chekov said standing up. "I can't see anything else to do at this point."

"You read my mind, Pavel." Sulu said. Chekov left the office and assumed the science station. Lt. Commander Gonzoles returned to her station when Chekov returned to the bridge. Pavel accessed the library computer with its multiple data base interfaces and started his research. It didn't take long for Commander Chekov to come up with some rather interesting information.

Since the Captain had not returned to the bridge, Chekov headed to his office. He had never officially taken command back from Gonzoles. When he passed her station he just tapped lightly on her board and winked at her. She looked up, nodded, and smiled as he went by.

Chekov walked into the Captain's office and sat down. Sulu looked up from his computer screen and his research. "What did you find out?"

"The Tray-dah is a Della Mir ship registered out of Kali Guari. The ship is listed as a freighter with a crew of three. The owner is listed as Tau Mauru, an exiled Romulan, who has a habit of ignoring regulations regarding the shipping of cargo. He has been sited and fined on numerous occasions for the transport of everything from dangerous animals to unauthorized armaments." Chekov reported.

"Sounds like Brady's kind of business associate." Sulu said. "Did you try cross referencing their names?"

"Of course." Chekov said. "But there was no official link between the two."

"No official link?" Sulu asked.

"I have the computer comparing their itineraries for the last year to see if any pattern show up. That will take a little more time." Chekov said. "And of course if they deviated from filed flight plans, we may have trouble catching that."

"Any idea why this Tau Mauru was exiled?"

"Details are sketchy." Chekov reported. "My best information says that he was operating in a black market while he was prime subcommander of a military outpost on the edge of the neutral zone."

"Ambitious." Sulu said. "He must have had some connections to be exiled instead of executed."

"In what we know of their high command, the family name of Tau appears several times." Chekov said.

"Is it possible that he still has connections with the Romulans?" Sulu asked.

"A spy?" Chekov asked. "There is no way of telling. But of what use would he be? Who is going to tell a Romulan anything?"

"Matthew Brady?" Sulu wondered.

Chekov frowned. That didn't make sense to him. "Every time we have run into this man, he has helped us in some way."

"And helped himself in the process." Sulu reminded him.

"You don't like him, Hikaru." Chekov smiled at his old friend. He knew what the problem was. He also knew the Captain was not likely to admit it.

The door signal chimed and Dr. Patrick joined them in the office. "I understand we are on our way to New Freedom."

"Do you have spies on my bridge, Pat?" Sulu joked.

"No, I'm psychic."

"What can I do for you, Doctor?" The Captain ignored his chief medical officer's remark.

"I was just wondering if we were going to have time for a little shore leave while at New Freedom." Pat smiled. "I hear they have a bar there with Kellian dancing girls. And supposedly they do the traditional dance of the bridesmaids."

Chekov laughed. "Doctor, a man of your age! I am shocked."

"There's not a damn thing wrong with my age." Dr. Patrick protested. All three men in the room were in their fifties. Dr. Patrick was the youngest of them. "Your problem, Pavel, is your wife won't let you go."

"You should get to know my wife better, Pat." Pavel said. "She'd love a bar like that."

"Unfortunately, I doubt we'll have time to indulge ourselves." The Captain said bringing them back to business. "Mr. Chekov, keep me informed on that computer search."

"Aye Captain." Chekov left them alone.

"Did you come on business Doctor or are you just bored." Sulu asked.

"Just touching base." Pat said. "I understand we are seeking Matthew Brady again."

"Again."

"What did he do this time?"

"I'm not sure." The Captain said. "But he seems to have some involvement in this Cardasian situation that we've been watching for the last year. Captain Uhura and I just want to talk to him about it."

"Good."

"Are you concerned Doctor?"

"No, Captain." Patrick smiled. "I just know that Mr. Brady has a special knack for disturbing your usual calm demeanor."

"That he does." Sulu admitted. "But I'm sure Captain Uhura will keep me on

track. Now, unless there is something else, Doctor, I must get back to the bridge."

"Mind if I tag along?" Pat asked. They returned to the bridge. Sulu gave the order to hold position just outside the station's sensor range. The Artful Dodger was already in orbit. Captain Uhura sent a coded message that the Tray-dah was not at the station. The dockmaster would not allow a full-scale search of the facility, but Uhura was sending a landing party onto the station to look for Matthew Brady.

"Initiate a full sensor sweep." Sulu ordered. "Look for any anomaly that might indicate a cloaked ship."

"Aye Captain."

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Aboard the Tray-dah, a young Romulan man walked around the seated Matthew Brady. At forty-five, Brady was keeping his hair shorter but still kept the full beard. He now had two earrings in his left ear. He could barely tolerate this brash Romulan who was half his age, but at the moment he had no choice. His hands were bound in front of him with state-of-the-art programmable restraining cuffs.

"Tau, these are really not necessary." Brady said holding up his wrists.

"Maybe not." Tau Mauru said "But I like them. They look particularly good on you, Brady. Now tell me why Starfleet is suddenly so interested in you."

"It's a personal matter." Brady smiled "A jealous husband."

"It is bad for business." Tau Mauru stooped to look in Matthew's eyes. "I don't like it."

"Look, Tau, I can take care of it. Put me ashore and I will get rid of him." Brady forced himself to smile. Where the hell was Sulu anyway? Didn't he get the message?

"Why should I believe you? Who is this jealous husband?"

"He's the Captain of the Excelsior." Brady said. "I swear I didn't know she was married. But you know those military wives, always lonely."

"Captain Tau." A crewman reported. "A Starfleet ship has just dropped out of warp."

Tau turned towards the Della-Mir crewman, Fend-roh. "Which ship is it and what is her heading?"

"It is the Excelsior." Fend-roh reported. "She is holding her position just barely in our sensor range. They can not know we are here."

"Brady!" Tau railed. He turned back to Fend-roh "Prepare to go to warp five on my mark."

"Captain, what about the meeting on New Freedom?" Fend-roh asked. "It is imperative that we make that meeting. We are cloaked. They can not detect us."

"Idiot!" Tau scoffed. "How are we going to dock or transport to the station if we are cloaked?"

"Why don't we just give him to the Starfleet captain?" Fend-roh asked. "They have no reason to detain us. And he is no longer of any use to us."

"And if you think Brady will not turn us in to save his own skin, you should talk to some of his old partners. If you can find them."

"The Captain wants me." Brady said calmly. "He doesn't even know about you. He doesn't even suspect anything. There's no reason for him to ask and certainly no reason for me to volunteer anything."

"You want us to give you to Starfleet?" Tau studied him. Brady tried not to look eager.

"Like I said, it's not Starfleet. It's personal." Brady shrugged his shoulders. "And if we are on New Freedom he can't touch me officially anyway."

"He can't touch any of us on New Freedom." Fend-roh agreed. "It's the only way."

Tau paced as he thought. He did not like being put into this position. He had to make that meeting to get instructions from his uncle. If he did not prove himself with this operation he would never be allowed to return to the home world. If he requested emergency landing clearance from the dockmaster and did not decloak until the last minute, it might be possible to outwit the Starfleet captain. It would require precise timing and a lot of luck.

"Bring us into a close orbit of the station." Tau ordered.

"While we are cloaked?" Fend-roh questioned. "That can be very dangerous."

"Just do as I order! Brady, our business is not over yet." Tau said. "You still owe me and I will collect. Believe me."

"I believe you." Brady said softly.

"Fend-roh, prepare to land." Tau ordered. He sat down at the communication station and opened a narrow beam hailing frequency. "New Freedom dockmaster. Request emergency landing procedure on landing pad eleven."

"Identify yourself." the dockmaster answered.

"The freighter Tray-dah out of Kali Guari." Tau replied.

"I do not have you on my screen, Tray-dah." The dockmaster said. "Disengage cloaking device. You have permission for emergency landing on pad eleven."

"Captain." Commander Rand reported. "The New Freedom Dockmaster just ordered the Tray-dah to disengage cloaking device and gave her permission for an emergency landing on pad eleven."

"How fast?" Sulu asked.

"Two minutes fifteen seconds, best speed." Gonzoles answered. Of course in this close proximity they could only use impulse power.

"Do it."

"Aye."

"She'll land before we get there." Chekov said. "We can not violate the sanctuary agreement."

"We'll see." Sulu said. "After all they must get by the Dodger."

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The Artful Dodger orbited below Space Station New Freedom compared to the Excelsior's position. They had also heard the conversation between the dockmaster and the Tray-dah. Captain Uhura was prepared.

"Lt. Karoor, change course to intercept the freighter." Uhura ordered.

"Aye Sir." Karoor answered from his station at the helm.

"Transporter room tie into the sensors and stand by." She said into the comline.

"As soon as you have a fix, energize."

"Aye Captain." Chief Yin replied. Commander T'Penn and Ensign Riveria stood on the pad with phasers at the ready. Uhura had informed Sulu of her plan. He had liked it, simple and legal. Yin watched her board. "Transporter lock attained. Energizing."

T'Penn and Riveria beamed aboard the Tray-dah as it was still descending towards the space station. T'Penn quickly assessed the situation. Time was of the essence. She simply stunned the crewman at the helm and reached around his slumped body to adjust the ship's course. No time to reverse course, she adjusted it so that the freighter skimmed past the station.

While T'Penn was involved with the helm, the Romulan at the communication station turned and lunged at Riveria. He grabbed the ensign's arm and sent the phaser flying across the bridge of the ship. As they struggled, Brady brought the full force of his shackled wrists down on the Tau Mauru's back. The Romulan slumped to the deck.

"Thank you, Mr. Brady." Victor straightened and adjusted his jacket.

"No, thank you, Mr. Riveria." Matthew Brady laughed.

"Ensign." T'Penn said. "Contact the Captain."

"Aye Commander." Mr. Riveria stepped over the body of Tau to the communications station. He opened a frequency to the Artful Dodger. "Mission accomplished, Captain."

"Well done, Mr. Riveria." Uhura said. "Bring the freighter around to the rendezvous coordinates."

"Aye Captain."

"How about relieving me of these, Commander?" Brady asked T'Penn holding up his confined wrists.

"I'm afraid that is for the Captain to decide." T'Penn said. Within two minutes the three ships had met. Uhura ordered Commander T'Penn to search the computer files of the freighter and Ensign Riveria to accompany the prisoners to the Excelsior. They beamed directly to Excelsior's brig.

"Welcome, gentlemen." Commander Johnson greeted them. He turned to Riveria.

"You are from the Dodger, Ensign?"

"Aye, Sir. Ensign Riveria."

"Still here, Mr. Johnson?" Brady asked pleasantly.

"I see you'll be visiting us again." Mel Johnson smiled. He put the other two in a cell. Then examined Brady's restraints. "Nice."

"Give me a break, Mel." Brady said. "These things are killing me."

Commander Johnson removed the restraining cuffs. He turned to one of his staff that was standing guard. "Lt. Hicks, escort Mr. Brady and Ensign Riveria to conference room two. The Captain is waiting for them. Wait there."

"What about us?" Tau demanded.

"Sit down and be quiet." Mr. Johnson ordered. "We'll get around to you."

The security guard showed them the way then stationed himself outside the door. In the conference room waited Captain Sulu, Captain Uhura, and Dr. Patrick.

"Sit down Mr. Brady." Sulu said pleasantly, "I understand you were looking for me."

"I wasn't sure you got the message." Brady said. "You certainly took your time."

"Have you considered leaving a clearer message?" Sulu asked but did not wait for an answer. "Mr. Riveria took it quite personally when you disappeared on his watch."

"Sorry, kid." Brady said to Riveria. Victor said nothing. "But I was not in control of the situation."

"So you and your partner Tau Mauru had a falling out?" Sulu asked.

"Tau is not my partner." Brady said. "We had done business in the past, but not for a long time. He will tell you differently, but he is interested in politics not profits."

"All the more reason for us to be interested in him." Sulu said.

"Mr. Brady," Captain Uhura. "Right now my first officer is going through the computer system on the Tray-dah. Would you like to tell us what she will find?"

"It wasn't my ship, Captain." Brady emphasized. "But I believe you may find evidence of the Cardasian arms build up I have already told you about."

"What else Brady?" Sulu asked.

"Perhaps some explanation as to the Klingons recent actions." Brady said.

"Perhaps?"

"I have a friend among the Klingons, who's name I like to keep out of this, who felt that Tau was attempting to cause trouble along the Cardasian borders." Brady said carefully.

"This would be the woman you spoke to at the Fly By Night just over a week ago?" Sulu asked. "Kelljar?"

Brady could not hide his surprise. He wondered how Captain Sulu had gotten her name. He repeated. "I prefer to keep her name out of it. But my friend tells me that the Romulans are interested in causing trouble between the Klingons and the Cardasians."

"Why?" Dr. Patrick asked. "The Romulans have never liked the Klingons but why bring the Cardasians into it?"

"To strain the treaty between the Klingons and Federation?" Uhura suggested. The treaty was over a decade old but there were those on both sides who still wanted it to fail.

"Or to embarrass the Federation during the negotiations with the Cardasians?" Sulu thought. Ambassador Spock had been attempting for over a year to get the Cardasians to see the Federations side. Admiral Kirk had informed both Uhura and Sulu that things were not going well, but that was not common knowledge.

"Possibly to make a fortune supplying both sides, during a war." Brady added. What a profit that would be, he thought.

"But why a freighter? What can a freighter do alone along the border?" Dr. Patrick asked again.

"A freighter can plant evidence. A freighter can come and go without notice where a warship can not." Brady explained. "A freighter can deal with both sides."

"What is your part in this, Mr. Brady?" Captain Uhura asked. Matthew Brady

looked at her innocently. "Or should I ask Tau Mauru"

"Mainly I provided him with introductions to several traders and independent business people." Brady said. "I'm sure if you ask Tau, he won't have much nice to say about me."

"Why is that?" Uhura asked.

"I drive a hard bargain, Captain Uhura." Brady smiled slyly. Uhura and Sulu exchanged glances.

"What did you get from this bargain?" Sulu asked.

"What I get from every deal, profit." Brady explained. "In this case, there is a small ship registered in my name waiting for me on New Freedom."

"Does this ship have a cloaking device?" Sulu asked.

"Captain, that would be illegal." Brady evaded.

"Exactly." Sulu agreed. "Does it have one?"

"No." Brady said. "But I haven't even been aboard her yet. I'd like to see my new ship before I retire, so how long is this going to take?"

"Until we're done." Sulu said quietly. He touched a control on the table. The door opened and Lt. Hicks stepped in. "Return Mr. Brady to a holding cell. And Bring Tau Mauru in for questioning."

"One question, Captain." Brady said before Lt. Hicks had a chance to say aye. "Just what charge are you holding me on?"

"Possession of an illegal cloaking device for one." Sulu said calmly.

"But it isn't my ship." Brady said again.

"That has yet to be established." Sulu said.

Brady looked to Ensign Riveria for help. Victor didn't want to help Brady, but he had to report what he saw. "Mr. Brady did appear to be a captive on the Tray-dah when we beamed onto her, Sir."

Sulu hadn't wanted to hear that. Without a charge of some kind, Sulu couldn't just throw him in the brig as he'd like to. But until all the questions were answered, he could at least keep him on the ship. "Lt. Hicks, bring Tau Mauru here. Mr. Brady will stay with us awhile."

"Aye Captain." Lt. Hicks said on his way out.

"Bridge to Captain Sulu." Mr. Foot's voice came over the comline

"Sulu here."

"Commander T'Penn is requesting permission to come aboard, Sir." He said.

"Have Commander T'Penn join us in the conference room." Sulu answered.

"Aye, Captain."

"Maybe now we'll get some more concrete answers." Captain Uhura said.

Lt. Hicks brought Tau Mauru to the conference room just as Commander T'Penn walked in. Sulu instructed Hicks to hold Tau in the corridor until they called for him.

T'Penn took the last empty seat at the table. "I have completed the survey of the Tray-dah's records. They show a transfer of funds to a Cardasian Gul on Lius Trine. The reason for the transfer is not given, however the amount is substantial. The records also show several visits to agricultural settlements on the Klingon side of the border.

However there is no record of any cargo or funds changing hands. There are also extensive records that monitor the movements of Pultreel and her guards."

"What?" Sulu and Uhura asked almost simultaneously.

"Who?" Dr. Patrick asked. Ensign Riveria was glad he wasn't the only one in the room who had no idea what was so important that it made both Captains sit up and take notice.

"Pultreel is the adolescent daughter of Klive of the Klingon High Council." Captain Uhura said to the Doctor. "She is the last of his children. His three sons were killed in battle with the Romulans."

"The last of his family all together." Sulu added. "The last of a very powerful house who has been an important ally to the Federation these last ten years."

"T'Penn, any indication of future plans regarding Pultreel?" Uhura asked.

"No Captain." T'Penn answered. "Only a detailed record of her movements over the last six months."

"Tau was heading to New Freedom to receive instructions from his uncle." Brady offered.

Sulu turned to Brady surprised. It was not like him to offer information. Of course it could only help him to distance himself from the Romulan. Brady obviously did not want to give Sulu any reason to hold him. "Perhaps it is time to talk to Tau. Mr. Riveria, if you'd ask him to join us please."

"Aye." Mr. Riveria stepped outside and brought Tau in. Tau sat in the chair Victor had just vacated, next to Brady. The tall young ensign stood behind them. Lt. Hicks, the security guard, came in and stood just inside the door.

"Tau Mauru, we have a few questions we need to ask you." Sulu said. "I am Captain Sulu. This is Captain Uhura."

"You are Captain of Excelsior?" Tau demanded irately.

"Yes." Sulu said simply.

Tau eyed Sulu with contempt. He turned to Brady. "This is the jealous husband?"

Sulu also turned his attention back to Brady. "Jealous husband?"

"I had to tell him something. I had to give him a reason why you would follow me." Brady smiled wickedly. "It was a story I had no trouble sticking to."

"No matter." Captain Sulu said. He did not want to get sidetracked by personal business now. "First things first. Tau Mauru, what do you know about the incident on Starbase Eight in which Mr. Brady disappeared."

"Nothing." The Romulan said.

"You were on Starbase Eight." Sulu said. "You left just after Mr. Riveria was assaulted. Mr. Brady was found on your ship as a prisoner I am told. And you know nothing?"

"Brady is in breach of contract. He did not deliver the promised goods which he has already been paid for." Tau said. "How I deal with him is not a Starfleet matter."

"However assault of a Starfleet officer is and possession of an unregistered cloaking device is." Captain Uhura added.

"Mr. Brady," Sulu said watching Tau Mauru. "You must have seen who rendered

Mr. Riveria unconscious. Was it Tau Mauru?"

"Yes." Brady said. Tau glared at him menacingly, but said nothing. His uncle had warned him not to trust humans. They were treacherous liars. He must keep calm and think. It was no time to let his temper get the best of him.

"Now that we know what happened there. We will move on." Captain Sulu proceeded. "You say Mr. Brady has not delivered promised goods. What was he suppose to deliver?"

"This is not Starfleet's concern." Tau said.

"Mr. Brady?" Captain Uhura asked.

"I did not deliver because I never received the item." Brady said.

"Which was?" Captain Sulu asked.

"An access code." Brady said. "I was suppose to obtain it from a servant of the Klingon house of Gorgan. She did not have it."

"This man lies to save himself." Tau said.

"How would he save himself by lying?" Uhura asked. "He is not presently charged with anything."

"He has the code but was holding out for more money. Surely a crime in your Federation." Tau said. They had so many. "He does not honor a contract."

Sulu and Uhura smiled at each other. This young Romulan was not going to be a problem. It may take time but they would eventually know everything he knew. Captain Uhura asked. "What was the access code for?"

Tau did not know what to say. He never should have admitted there was an access code. He never should have gotten mixed up with Brady. He decided he had said enough.

"We know you have been monitoring the movements of Pulteel of the house of Gorgan." Captain Sulu said. "Commander T'Penn has a special ability with computers. She has given us a full report."

"Bridge to Captain Sulu." Chekov's voice came over the comline.

"Sulu here."

"Captain, the dockmaster of New Freedom questions our interference with the landing of the Tray-dah. They claim that since the freighter had been given official clearance to land the sanctuary agreement was in effect."

"I'll be right there, Mr. Chekov." Sulu said. "Lt. Hicks, take Tau Mauru back to his cell. As for Mr. Brady, ID him and assign him quarters."

"Aye Sir." Lt. Hicks responded and followed his orders. He took them to the brig where Mr. Johnson locked the Romulan in a cell. He fitted Mr. Brady with a wrist ID-band that would tell the computer where he was at all times. Lt. Hicks then escorted him to the guest quarters.

Commander T'Penn and Ensign Riveria returned to the Artful Dodger. The two Captains took a minute in the conference room.

"It took quite awhile for the dockmaster to object to our taking the freighter." Uhura said. "I wonder who is really complaining."

"We should alert the Klingons." Sulu said.

"We should alert command first." Uhura said pointedly. "Then the Klingons."

"Do you have any connections in the Empire?" Sulu asked.

"I know a few people." Uhura asked. "Why?"

"I'd like you to go to them and inform them of the threat. Just because we've run across this boy does not mean the threat is over." Sulu said. "I'll clean up here. Inform Starfleet Command. Finish the interrogations. Deal with the dockmaster of New Freedom."

"Agreed." Captain Uhura said. He walked her to the transporter room. "But Hikaru, when this is all over I want an explanation of the jealous husband remark."

Captain Sulu laughed. "What is there for me to say? Brady offered his explanation."

"Yes. And I saw the look that passed between you." Uhura said. "Of course I could always ask Jimmi."

"If she has an explanation, I'd like to hear it too." Sulu said. Uhura returned to her ship and Sulu headed for the bridge to deal with the dockmaster.

Within minutes the Artful Dodger pulled away and jumped into warp. Captain Sulu hailed the dock master of Space Station New Freedom. On the screen appeared a small humanoid man. His specie wasn't obvious.

"This is Joreed, dockmaster of New Freedom." He said. "We are logging a formal complaint against the Federation ship NCC 2015 the Artful Dodger for the unlawful abduction of the freighter DMC 2354 the Trah-Dah."

"Unlawful abduction?" Sulu asked. "On what do you base this charge, Joreed?"

"The freighter had been given official clearance to land and therefore the sanctuary agreement was in force." Joreed said.

"That would not be my assessment of the agreement." Captain Sulu said. "Where does this interpretation come from?"

"I have conferred with my superiors, the owners of this station." Joreed said. "I have been advised to file a formal complaint with Starfleet."

"I will pass on your complaint along with my report to Starfleet command." Sulu said.

"That is not good enough, Captain." Joreed said. "We want the freighter and her crew returned safely to the station. And we want the Captain of the Artful Dodger to turn himself over to civilian authorities until this matter is resolved."

"He can't be serious." Chekov said standing next to the center seat. Sulu glanced at Commander Rand. She nodded, indicating she had cut the audio transmission off.

"He knows the Dodger has left the area. What he wants is the Tray-dah." Sulu said. "Who's aboard the freighter now?"

"Gonzoles, Yost, and Rosen." Chekov said.

: "Rand, get me Gonzoles on a secured channel." Sulu said.

"Aye." Rand said. "Channel open and secured, Captain."

"Commander Gonzoles, set course for Starbase Eighteen, maximum warp. We'll meet you there. Do not inform New Freedom Dockmaster."

"Aye Captain." Gonzoles answered and terminated the connection. In less than a

minute the Tray-dah left the area, jumping to warp speed as the earliest safe distance.

"They are not going to like this." Chekov commented.

"So?" Sulu responded. "Ok, Rand, let's talk to the dockmaster again."

"Audio transmission reestablished." Rand said.

"Joreed. I'm afraid I can not comply with your request." Captain Sulu said.

"Both ships have left the area. However I will inform Starfleet command of your interpretation of the sanctuary agreement and your complaint against the Artful Dodger."

"You can add a formal complaint against yourself, Captain Sulu." Joreed said angrily. "For obstruction of justice. But you needn't inform Starfleet command. I will be in touch with the Federation directly. New Freedom out."

Sulu looked at Chekov. "You were right. They didn't like it."

"Now what?" Chekov asked.

"I better talk to command." Sulu said. "Commander Rand, get Starfleet Command and put it through to my ready room."

"Aye, Captain."

"I don't see any point in hanging around here." Sulu said standing up. "Take us back to Starbase Eighteen."

"And Mr. Brady?" Chekov asked.

"I can't imagine New Freedom allowing us to beam any one down now." Sulu said thinking out loud. "We'll have to take him with us. We'll get him back to his ship...later."