

Sulu led the way as he and Brady left the bar together. Brady was the taller of the two and the younger. But it did not take the Captain's uniform to tell who was in charge. As they came to the transporter room, Brady asked. "Now what?"

"Now we talk on Excelsior." Sulu said. After they had beamed up, Sulu continued. "I have a couple of possibilities I want to discuss with you before things go any farther."

"And will Captain Kirk be joining us?" Brady asked.

"Captain Kirk has some questions, yes." Sulu said. He shouldn't have been surprised that Brady knew who Kirk was; the Captain's reputation was considerable. But Brady had always given Sulu the impression he avoided Starfleet.

"So what's this Kirk really like?" Brady asked as they walked down the corridor.

"Interesting question." Sulu tried to think how he could explain the Captain in one sentence. "He is a natural leader. Intelligent. Resourceful."

"You admire the man?" Brady asked him. "Trust him?"

"Yes." Sulu answered without any hesitation. "I've known him my entire military career, he has never let me down."

"By the book?" Brady asked.

Now Sulu hesitated. There was no reason to go into particulars. "Generally."

"Ok." Brady nodded.

"Ok?" Sulu raised his eyebrow, stopping outside the conference room door. Did Brady think what he thought of Captain Kirk was going to make a difference?

"That's good enough for me." Brady shrugged. Sulu's trust would have been enough, but his hesitation about the rulebook remark was even better.

They walked into the conference room. Captain Kirk sat at the table alone. He was intently interested in the computer screen. He was reading up on Starfleet events that featured Matthew Brady. Kirk looked up as they came into the room.

"Captain Kirk." Sulu introduced them. "This is Matthew Brady."

"Mr. Brady." Kirk indicated a chair. "Please sit down."

"Thank you, Captain." Matthew said with a practiced casual smile. Brady sat in the chair opposite Kirk. Sulu took the chair between them. Sulu glanced over Kirk's shoulder at the computer screen. It was angled so that Brady couldn't see it.

"I understand that in certain matters Captain Sulu has promised to keep what information you give him confidential." Kirk started.

"Sulu can do what he wants with the information." Brady said. "There are just certain people that I don't want to know I am talking to Starfleet at all. It's bad for business."

"Just what business are you in, Mr. Brady?" Kirk asked.

"Whatever comes along." Matthew said. "Mostly I deal in information these days."

"I would imagine this information doesn't come cheaply." Kirk said. Brady just shrugged and smiled. "Then let's get down to business. What do you know about Richard Lucre?"

"Everything I know about him is second hand." Brady cautioned. "He is a very rich man and he tends to do his business through others. His reach is very long."

"Something a little more concrete, Mr. Brady." Sulu directed.

"I know that Tau Reganer and a Bolian named Rumml have done a lot of business with him for the Romulans lately." Brady said. "He also does a great deal of business with a

Cardassian Gul named Ukark. A nasty fellow according to my sources."

"Just what are your sources, Mr. Brady?" Captain Kirk asked.

"If my sources were predisposed to talk to Starfleet, I imagine they'd be here now instead of me." Matthew smiled. He looked the Captain in the eye. "I'll have to keep that to myself."

"Fine." Kirk said, "But I need more details. I want to know about this slave trade you've hinted at, the missing Klingons, and the relationship between New Freedom and the Cardassians."

"Details, huh?"

"Details." Kirk reiterated.

"After I heard Tau Reganer say that debt was paid and that somehow I instigated the whole thing, I asked some questions of my own." Brady said. "Your missing Klingons have not shown up in any of the usual places, as far as I can tell. If they had been taken for commercial reasons there are people who would know and they don't."

"How wide spread is this slave trade?" Kirk asked.

"It's very select and very discreet." Brady said. "There aren't many on New Freedom that are not involved in it that even know of its existence."

"How is it you know of it then?" Sulu asked. "Have you been involved?"

"No" Brady shrugged. "I have a friend who talks in her sleep."

Kirk had to smile at that. "So what do you think happened to these missing Klingons, Mr. Brady?"

"I don't know." Brady said. "But evidently General Frowlk has received several threats telling the Klingons to stay out of any business between the Federation and the Cardassians."

"Do you know where these threats have come from?" Sulu asked.

"It's very vague." Brady sighed. "There are rumors. Some suggest the threats come from Lucre himself, others say it is the Romulan, and others claim it to be directly from the Cardassians. I don't know what the truth is there."

"Gut feeling?" Kirk asked.

"I'd put money on the Cardassians," Brady shrugged and added, "If I was a betting man."

"Aren't you?" Sulu asked. He turned to Kirk and said, "If the Cardassians and the Romulans were to form an alliance...."

"Yes." Kirk said to Sulu. "We need to know more about this Gul. His name has come up in Spock's research as well."

"To find out more than Spock knows, we are going to have to go to less official sources." Sulu said and opened the command com line. "Commander Gonzoles, report to me in the conference room."

"Aye Sir." Gonzoles answered. "On my way."

She walked in a few moments later. "Reporting as ordered, Sir."

"Sit down Gonzoles." Kirk said. She did. "Good to see you again."

"Thank you, Sir. Nice to see you again." Gonzoles said. She nodded to Brady with a businesslike, "Mr. Brady."

"Rosey.." Brady smiled.

"Gonzoles, I want you to work with Mr. Brady to find out everything possible about Gul

Ukark. Exhaust every avenue possible.” Sulu said. “We are especially interested in any contact with New Freedom and/or the Romulans. Use Spock’s research as a starting point.”

“Aye Sir.” Gonzoles answered. When the Captain did not add anything to her orders, she stood and said “If you will come with me, Mr. Brady.”

“Gladly.” Brady smiled as he followed her from the conference room.

Gonzoles took Brady to her office. It was a standard shipboard office, but she had added a narrow table along one wall to hold her many plants. She had also put up shelves that held not only plants, but candles and pictures of her family. Brady could not help but think the bright colors warmed up the room.

She sat down at her desk and asked the computer for all information on Gul Ukark. Brady pulled up a chair next to her so he could see her screen. He watched the readouts intently, taking in every detail he could of just what information Star Fleet could access. Brady’s near photographic memory served him well in situations like this.

Ukark commanded a Galor class war ship called the Yarktar, translation unknown. The Yarktar had been sighted along the Cardassian-Federation border numerous times over the last 8 years. It had never been in a battle with a Federation ship.

“That’s not much to go on.” Gonzoles frowned. “Computer, check for new files marked for my attention. Gonzoles, Lt. Commander.”

“Three files found.” The computer responded.

“Origin?”

“Lt. Briscoe, Lt. Yamato, Captain Sulu.”

“Display file from Captain Sulu.” Gonzoles said. More information regarding Gul Ukark came on her screen. The Cardassian Gul had a large family, many of which were serving in the military. He had extensive financial holdings in the Cardassian Empire. Contact with the Yarktar had been plotted and cross-referenced with several independent traders who regularly crossed the Cardassian border.

“The colonies along the border seem to have very sophisticated sensor equipment.” Brady commented.

Gonzoles shrugged. “I believe this information comes from Ambassador Spock. I would imagine there is more than one origin to these readings.”

“You know this Ambassador?” Brady asked.

“AI met him when he was still in Starfleet.” Gonzoles said as she continued to study the information on her screen. “What do you know about these traders?”

“Rumml is in and out of New Freedom a lot.” Brady said. “He trades across the Romulan Neutral Zone and he has been dealing with Tau Reganer a lot these days. Jenz owns a couple of ships. Does a nice business with the colonies on the Cardassian border. Sherrell flies for Jenz. Edik Sherrell has a fondness for an old friend of mine. She may be able to tell us more about him and his business.”

“Who is this old friend?” Gonzoles asked.

“Maryann Lucas.” Brady says. “She works for Tau Reganer.”

“In what capacity?” Gonzoles asked.

“She’s a pilot.” Brady shrugged. “And she has lots of contacts that can be useful.”

“But you did not suggest we call her when the Captain was looking for some answers in the Fly by Night’s apartment.” Gonzoles observed.

“With you sitting there with your hair down and that off the shoulder thing on.” Brady smiled at her. “She just did not come to mind.”

“Mr. Brady. I find that hard to believe.” Gonzoles laughed. She turned back to her desk and opened the com line again. “Gonzoles to bridge communications.”

“Lt. Skorny.”

“Mr. Skorny, I need communication access at this station.” Gonzoles said. “Priority alpha green.”

“Aye Commander.” Skorny answered. “You have access. Advise upon completion.”

“Thank you, Mr. Skorny.” She said and turned to Brady. “Now, how do we reach this friend of yours?”

“Maryann.” Brady smiled his most charming smile. “How are you?”

“I’m fine, Matt.” Maryann’s smile was more wary. “What do you want?”

“I have to want something to call you?” Brady asked.

“Yes.” Maryann laughed. “When have you ever called without a reason?”

“Ok.” Brady shrugged. “I need you. What can I say?”

“Tell me.” Maryann said.

“You’ve heard what happened?” Brady asked.

She nodded. “What is it with you and Star fleet?”

“I don’t know.” Brady sighed. “Wrong place. Wrong time. But if I am going to get out of this, I need to give them something.”

“And so you come to me.”

“You know me, Maryann, I don’t pay any attention to politics. Give me something. Some piece of information that I can use.”

“Are they listening?” Maryann asked.

“No. You know their rules.” Brady grinned. “You are my lawyer.”

Maryann laughed heartily. “I’ll tell you, Matt, I don’t know what is going on. But I do know that Tau is ready to kill you.”

“Well, I am not surprised. But I don’t think that helps me any.” Brady sighed. “Come on, Sweetie, help me out. Surely, Eddie has told you something.”

“Sweetie.” She chuckled. “It’s been a long time since I heard that. All I know is that it has something to do with Doc Kendar. You know him, right?”

“Sure.” Matthew Brady sat back and studied his old friend. “What’s he got to do with it?”

“Some research he is doing.” Maryann shrugged. “Eddie has made deliveries to him four times in the last few months. All he said is that it had something to do with Klingons.”

“Damn.” Brady said.

“Think Star Fleet will buy it?” Maryann asked.

Brady nodded. “But you never told me anything. You told me to go to hell, got it?”

“You bet!” Maryann said. “I can’t stand you since I dumped you.”

“Thanks Sweetie.” Brady said with a smile and terminated the connection. He sat back in his chair and looked at Commander Gonzoles. He did not wait for her to ask. “Doc Kendar is a crazy old man that lives on a moon in the Vishnu system.”

“His first name?” Gonzoles asked.

“I have no idea.” Brady shrugged. “He’s always been called Doc. I haven’t had any contact with him in a couple of years.”

Gonzoles brought up the information on the Vishnu system on her desk work station. Brady watched the readouts with interest. There was only one moon in the entire system capable of supporting human life. “Unless he had created his own biosphere, he has to be on Astaire. There are several settlements on that moon.”

The readouts shifted as Gonzoles asked the computer for a list of anyone with the last name Kendar known to be living on the moon. “Three possibilities.” Gonzoles said. “Robert, Michael and Colleen.”

“Definitely not Colleen.” Brady said with a grin.

“Michael is only 43 years old. You said old man, right?” Gonzoles asked the computer for details on Robert Kendar. The information and a picture came up on her screen. “Robert is 107 years old and has been living on Astaire for the last 52 years.”

“That’s him.” Brady said nodding at the picture. “Now what?”

“Gonzoles to Mirek.”

“Mirek here.” Came the audio answer. “What can I do for you, Rosita?”

“Ellen, I need you to look into some research done by Robert Kendar, last known to be in the Vishnu system.” Gonzoles said. “It should have something to do with Klingons.”

“That’s a little vague.” Mirek said.

“Whatever you can find out, Ellen.” Gonzoles said.

“Aye.” Mirek answered. “I’m on it.”

Gonzoles switched the com line. “Gonzoles to Captain Sulu.”

Sulu appeared on her desk view screen. “What have you got, Gonzoles?”

“A Dr. Robert Kendar.” Gonzoles reported. “He is evidently living on a moon in the Vishnu system and doing some kind of research involving Klingons. According to Mr Brady’s sources, he is somehow involved with Tau’s plans.”

“AWhat kind of research?” Sulu asked.

“Unknown.” Gonzoles said. “I am having Lt. Mirek research Kendar. Mr. Brady and I are still trying to find out more about Gul Ukark.”

“Keep digging.” Sulu said and terminated the connection. In his office, Sulu turned to his father-in-law. “Recognize the name, Doc?”

“That was a long time ago, Hikaru.” McCoy shook his head. “If memory serves, there were some researcher studying plant life on the other side of the moon when I was there. But what they were doing was of no help to my problems. I never paid them any mind.”

After they had talked to several of Brady’s acquaintances that could not give them any relevant information, Gonzoles accessed another communication channel for Brady. “Tomom,

have you had any luck?"

"You are alone, Matthew?" The young Barchin man asked.

"Almost." He smiled. When Tomom did not continue he added. "I am fine. Tell me what you have found out."

"You know how my father feels about the Cardassians." Tomom said. Brady nodded. "He knows of this Gul you asked about. He says that Ukark is getting rich off dealings with Tau Reganer."

"Ok." Brady nodded. "But what exactly are these dealings?"

"My father says that Ukark has financial interest in the manufacturing corporation on Lius Trine." Tomom said.

"The warship production facility." Brady said

"Yes. Tau Reganer recently bought part ownership of that corporation." Tomom nodded. "As you know, the Cardassians have increased production of all ships and weapon systems in the last six narus. Looks like they want to be ready for a fight with whoever shows up."

Brady smiled at Tomom's assertion. "So are Ukark and Tau involved in these Klingon border skirmishes?"

"Bak says yes." Tomom shrugged. "But I don't understand why someone would take Klingon border officials. What would you do with them?"

"I don't know." Brady said. "But have they shown up on New Freedom?"

"No." Tomom said. "But the Kerry-Lee has been meeting the Tray-dah to take on cargo before the Tray-dah docks at the station. The Kerry-Lee then leaves quickly. As far as I know, Sherrell is not talking."

"Yes." Brady nodded. "I heard Eddie was doing some jobs for Tau."

Tomom grinned. "Wonder where you heard that."

"A little bird told me."

"Bird?"

"Old saying." Brady shrugged. "Let me know if you find out anything else."

"Of course."

Brady turned to Gonzoles after signing off with his good friend. "I trust Tomom's information. He has connections all over the quadrant."

"Ok." Gonzoles nodded. She opened the senior officer com line. "Gonzoles to Mirek. Report."

"Dr Kendar does not have any official projects registered with any Federation scientific group." Mirek said. "His body of work is sporadic at best. His specialty appears to be the study of DNA of various life forms. It's not much, but that is what I have so far."

"Nothing to do with Klingons?"

"No Sir." Mirek nodded. "At least nothing official."

"Thanks Ellen." Gonzoles checked the time. First shift had ended. Gonzoles informed the bridge that they did not require further communication access. She opened the senior officer com line again. "Gonzoles to Captain Sulu."

"Captain Sulu is not on Excelsior." The computer answered.

"Gonzoles to Commander Chekov."

"Chekov here."

“Commander, we have established that Tau Reganer and Gul Ukark are partners in a weapon and battleship production facility on Lius Trine. We have unsubstantiated testimony that both are involved in the disappearance of the Klingons. Dr Kendar’s specialty is DNA research, but Mirek can find nothing regarding Klingons connected to him.”

“Very well, Commander.” Chekov said. “I will report to the Captain. Do you have any other leads to follow up on?”

Gonzoles looked to Brady, who shook his head. “Not at this time, Sir.”

“Very well, Chekov out.”

Brady checked the time. He was hungry again. He smiled at Gonzoles and said. “Have dinner with me, Rosey.”

Gonzoles hesitated. Mirek had a point; it was time to get on with her life. After all, it was just dinner. She shrugged. “Why not.”

Brady stood up and pushed the chair back against the wall where he found it. He nodded towards the picture of Rosita and Tomas Smith together on Risa that hung on the wall of her office. “Who is this? He looks familiar.”

Gonzoles looked at the pictured and sighed. “Lt. Commander Tomas Smith.”

“What ship is he on?”

“He was third officer of Excelsior.” Gonzoles closed the file and turned off her desk view screen. “He died in the line of duty last year.”

“Sorry.” Brady said. They headed towards the turbo life together. “You were close?”

“Yes.”

“And you don’t want to talk about it?”

“No, I don’t.” Gonzoles said.

“No problem.”