

Admiral Sulu was in the center seat. The Excelsior patrolled along the edge of the Neutral Zone. The Romulan scout ship had cloaked and disappeared from sight. Lt. Commander Kim was at helm, he was now the senior helm and second officer. Ensign Pelta was serving her first duty at the navigation station. She was a little nervous but determined to do well.

Commander Chekov studied the sensors from the science station. They were all quiet, waiting.

"Admiral." Commander Rand said. "I am getting a message on the Captain's channel from Starbase Eighteen. Coded urgent."

"Not personal?" Sulu asked.

"No Sir."

Sulu walked over to the communication station. He didn't have time for this now. "Play it here, Commander."

Jimmi's face appeared on the small screen at the communication station. She was visibly upset. "Harry, I need to talk to you as soon as possible. Brian is missing. He's not on the base. And I have no idea where he could have gone. Please call me as soon as you can."

"That's it?" Sulu asked. Rand just nodded. Sulu returned to the center seat. Rand and Chekov exchanged looks behind him. Chekov left his station and went over to Sulu.

"Hikaru." He said quietly

"There's nothing I can do, Pavel." Admiral Sulu said. He was still looking at the main view screen as if he stared at it hard enough he could make the Romulan ship appear. "You know this mission is priority one."

"You could call her. Get the details." Pavel said. He hesitated before adding "Do you want me to call her?"

Sulu turned and looked at his best friend. He almost laughed. "Can you imagine Jeanie's reaction if I had you call her about this? No, I will call her as soon as I am sure this scout ship is gone."

"Excuse me, Admiral." Chekov said. The ship was cloaked and could stay that way until it was safely on the Romulan side of the Neutral Zone. "But how are you going to be sure?"

"Reasonably sure, Commander." Sulu said. He and Chekov just looked at each other for a minute. Sulu sighed and said. "Rand, get my wife and put her through to my office."

"Aye Sir."

"Chekov, if I wanted logic from my first officer I could have a Vulcan at your station." Sulu said as he turned over the center seat to Chekov.

Chekov grinned and said. "Live long and prosper."

Hikaru Sulu sat down at his desk and turned on his computer screen. He waited for Jimmi to appear. When she did, she was still upset. The Admiral did not bother with pleasantries. "Tell me what happened."

"I thought we were making some progress." Jimmi started. She had been crying. "He was actually talking to me occasionally. When he did not show up for work tonight, I thought he just was mad about something. When he wasn't home by the time the bar was closing I was worried. I called security. The computer said he wasn't on the base. Security did a physical search of the whole base. He's gone."

"How many ships have left since the last time you saw him?" Sulu asked.

"I'm not sure of the time." Jimmi said. "Anywhere from ten to fifteen ships. A couple of technicians saw him in the main landing bay earlier in the day. Eight of the ships that left were there. Um...he also talked to Rosita on Pegasus. I sent her a message, but she hasn't called me back yet."

"I'll call the Pegasus." Sulu said.

"Harry, I need you to come home." Jimmi said fighting her tears. "Our baby is gone."

"It's not possible, Jeanie. I'm sorry. I just can't leave right now." Sulu said. "As soon as I've talked to Gonzales, I'll call you right back. Excelsior out."

Sulu leaned back in his chair. He knew he had cut her off too quickly but there was little he could do. And Admiral Sulu hated to admit feeling helpless. Where could Brian be and what could he be thinking? Sooner or later he was going to kill that boy. Just as soon as he knew he was safe.

"Admiral, we need you on the bridge." Chekov's voice came over the com line. Sulu jumped up and went back to work. His family life had always been trickier than his professional one. His call to the Pegasus would have to wait.

"What have you got?" Sulu asked Chekov as he came onto the bridge.

"A small ship just on the edge of our sensor range." Chekov said from the science station. "Headed for Romulan space."

"Not the Romulan ship we had before?" Sulu asked.

"No." Chekov responded. "It's an independent. I'm still trying to get an identification."

"Interception course, Mr. Kim." Sulu said taking his place in the center seat. "Put us between him and the Neutral Zone."

"Aye Sir." Kim replied bringing the starship around to confront the smaller craft.

"Do we have an ID yet?" Sulu asked.

"She is listed as the Bashzook. A Barolian freighter. The owner is listed as Rumml, an independent trader." Chekov reported. "I read three humanoids on board."

"Hail the freighter, Commander Rand." Sulu ordered.

"Channel open, Admiral."

"This is Admiral Sulu commanding the Federation Starship Excelsior." Sulu said. "Identify yourself."

"This is Rumml. Captain and owner of the Bashzook." A Barolian man appeared on their main screen. Jimmi had once described the average Barolian as a no necked barrel on squat legs. This description fit Rumml perfectly. "What can I do for you, Admiral?"

"You can explain what you are doing in this sector." Sulu said calmly.

"I have a delivery to make on the other side of the neutral zone." Rumml said "This is my regular route."

"Then you wouldn't mind sharing your manifest with us." Sulu suggested.

"I am already behind schedule." Rumml said "And I can't believe that Starfleet is interested in a load of Gamzain wine and Aldeberan whiskey bound for Remus outpost four."

"Isn't Aldeberan Whiskey considered contraband on Romulan outposts?" Sulu asked.

"Isn't that the problem of the subcommander who ordered it?" Rumml asked.

"I suppose it is." Sulu agreed. "But until I'm sure that's all you are carrying, I'll have to detain you here. You will disengage all weapons systems and unlock your computer controls."

"And if I don't, Admiral?"

"If you don't, you will find yourself out of business and in my brig." Sulu said. "Mr. Johnson, take a boarding party and physically search the Bashzook."

"Aye Sir." Commander Johnson said and left the bridge security station to carry out his orders.

"Mr. Chekov, have you established a link with the Bashzook's computer?" Sulu asked

"Yes Sir." Chekov said. "I am reading the manifest now."

"Thank you for your cooperation, Captain Rumml." Sulu said.

Matthew stirred in his bunk. He opened his eyes and surveyed the cabin of his small ship. Brian Sulu sat in the copilot's seat with his back to Brady. He was intent on something. Matthew got up quietly and approached the teen from the back. He waited until he was directly behind the boy.

"What are you doing, Brian?" He asked in Brian's ear.

Brian jumped and held his treasure against his chest. "Nothing!"

"Doesn't look like nothing." Matthew said reaching for the computer pad Brian held against himself. "Let me see."

"It's none of your business." Brian said. Matthew snatched the computer pad. But Brian hadn't been using the pad in the conventional sense. He had been using it to lean on while he was sketching on a piece of paper. The paper had been folded several times to fit in his vest pocket. The sketch was a likeness of Angel pictured at the Fly By Night Bar and Grill.

"Brian, this is good." Brady said studying the picture. "I didn't know you could draw."

"Why should you know?"

"Your mother never said anything about it." Matthew said.

"She doesn't know either."

"Private, huh?" Brady nodded and handed the picture back to Brian.

"Yeah." Brian said sullenly. He carefully folded the paper and secured it on one of the many pockets in his vest. "Now what?"

"The Shadow also has a cloaking device." Brady said. He sat in the pilots seat and began checking the controls. "So we will stay cloaked until we reach a safe haven. As soon as I take care of my business, I'll find a way to get you home."

"Who is this guy who wants you dead?" Brian asked.

"He's an exiled Romulan." Matthew shrugged. "He didn't like what I had to say to your father about him."

"I guess not." Brian smiled. "But where is a safe haven in the Orion system?"

"In the Betelgeuse astroid belt." Brady said.

"In an astroid belt?" Brian asked. "Are you crazy?"

"Nope." Brady said as he put the ship on manual control. "Pay attention, Kid. You may learn something."

Matthew Brady guided his small ship through the relatively stable asteroid belt that ringed the star Betelgeuse in the Orion Constellation. As they flew between the orbiting hunks of

rock, Brian saw what appeared to be a huge derelict barge. Brian checked the small ships limited sensor readout. The barge was emitting minimal energy and life signs.

"What is it?" Brian asked.

"A safe haven." Brady smiled. He opened a communication channel. "Haven, this is the Sly Fox. Requesting permission to land."

"Permission granted, Sly Fox." a woman's voice came back to them. "Lowering shields."

When the defensive shields lowered, Brian watched the sensor indicators of life and energy readings jump dramatically. The large landing bay of the barge opened and Brady landed his craft with ease. Matthew locked his controls and opened the gangway. Brian followed him out of the ship. They were the only ship in the landing bay as far as Brian could see.

Brady obviously knew where he was going. Brian followed him towards a door on the farthest wall of the bay. Before they reached that door, it opened to reveal a Orion animal woman. The green skinned humanoid woman wore a one piece pants outfit that was loose and flowing yet clung to her sensually. Brian's mouth fell open. He had only seen such a woman in a school mate's pornographic hologram. His friend had claimed that such a woman could kill an inexperienced Human man with her aggressive sexual style.

"Kwana Lureen." Matthew Brady stopped in his tracks and bowed slightly from the waist. "Many thanks for your gracious hospitality."

"It is good to see you again Captain Brady." she nodded slightly as a queen would nod to a visiting nobleman. "What brings you to see me?"

"Haven't you heard?" Brady smiled. "I seem to have developed a problem with the Tau family."

"And the vestally?" She indicated Brian. "He also had a problem with Tau?"

Brady laughed heartily. He put his arm around Brian and shook the boy's shoulder playfully. "No. He is just along for the ride. And he's quite the troublemaker for his tender years. Brian, say hello to your hostess Kwana Lureen. And be polite. You're talking to royalty, Kid."

"Hello Kwana Lureen." Brian said and bowed from the waist exactly as Brady had.

"Brian." She nodded. Lureen took Brady's arm and led them through the barge to a private room. An overstuffed couch formed a semi circle around a low table. "We can talk more comfortably here. Please sit. How may I help you, Captain Brady?"

"I have some business to take care of Kwana." Brady said. "But the Shadow is after me."

"I see." Kwana Lureen sat comfortably on the couch next to Brian. The teen could not take his eyes off of her. "You want me to get Tezuka out of your way."

"As I recall, he has a weakness where you are concerned." Brady smiled. "And I only need a short window of opportunity."

"It will cost you."

"I am prepared for that."

"Don't be so sure." She smiled. "And you Brian, are you prepared to pay?"

"Excuse me?" Brian didn't know what she meant or what to think.

"Kwana." a disembodied voice called. She touched a control pad on the table and had short conversation in a language that Brian had never heard.

"Excuse me, Captain Brady." she smiled as she headed for the door. "I have some

business to take care of."

Once the Kwana had left the room, Brian just stared at Matthew Brady. He wanted to demand answers, but was not sure what questions to ask. Brady just watched the boy for a moment before asking, "What are you staring at, Kid?"

"What's going on?" Brian demanded finally. "If she's royalty, what's she doing on this derelict? And what does she want me to pay?"

"You could translate Kwana to mean chief." Brady explained. "Lureen is a member of the royal family of her homeworld. Unfortunately they were thrown off the planet over a decade ago. I wouldn't worry about what she wants from you."

"What did she call me when we came onboard?" Brian wasn't convinced he shouldn't worry.

"Vestally." Brady laughed. "Loosely translated.... virgin."

"But..." Brian started to protest. Matthew looked at him with a knowing smile. There was nothing else for Brian to say.

"Don't worry Kid. I'll protect you."

"I don't need protecting." Brian insisted.

A young Orion girl brought in a tray with a bowl of fruit and a decanter with several glasses. She was not yet a teenager. Her black hair was kept shaved close to her scalp. She wore several rings in each ear. She smiled at Brian as she put the tray on the low table. "Kwana thought you might be hungry, Captain Brady."

"Thank you, Rengi." Brady said. He nodded to Brian. "This is Kwana Lureen's daughter. Rengi, this is Brian."

"May I pour you a glass of halz, Brian?" She asked.

"Sure... I guess." Brian said. She poured and handed him the glass of dark thick liquid. He tasted it warily. It was pleasantly sweet and refreshing. Brian smiled. "Thanks."

"Captain Brady." she said handing him a full glass.

"Thank you, Rengi." He smiled. "How is your father?"

"He is well, but away on business." She shrugged. "Was your business with my mother or my father?"

"Aren't you a little young to be concerned with business?" Brady asked.

"My mother says it is never too soon to learn the way of things." Rengi answered. "I must prepare for the day when I am Kwana."

"You believe everything your mother says?" Brian asked.

"She has no reason to lie to me." Rengi said with total certainty. Brian envied that certainty even if it made no sense to him.

"What if what you want is just not the same as what she wants?" Brian asked. "Mothers don't have to be right."

"What else would I want?" Rengi asked sitting on the floor across the table from Brian. Her big brown eyes were open and friendly. Brian seemed to forget Brady was even in the room.

"I don't know." Brian said. "Just to choose for your self."

"You are human, Brian?" She asked. She smiled at him in a way that made Brian want to trust her and talk to her. He nodded. "Is this the way of human boys?"

"I don't know." Brian answered absolutely truthfully. "But I want to choose my own

way. I just thought everyone would."

Kwana Lureen came back into the room. She was followed by two Orion men wearing the blue uniforms of her family. Brady stood as she entered so Brian did also.

"Captain Brady." Lureen said. "I have spoken to Tau Regana. You have quite a price on your head."

"Does Tau know I am here?"

"No." she smiled and sat down on the couch. "Please sit. I had other reasons to call New Freedom and asked Tau not about you but about the whereabouts of Tezuka. I told him I had a job for the Shadow."

"I doubt Tau will relay the message." Brady said.

"You're right." Lureen said. "But I am sure he will get the message none the less. Now as to the price...."

"Perhaps we could speak alone, Kwana."

"Rengi, show Brian around while his father and I talk." Kwana ordered. The girl stood up immediately to obey.

"He's not my father." Brian said.

"Do as you're told, Kid." Brady grabbed his arm roughly. Brian turned and looked him in the eye. "The attitude stops here. And I don't want to hear about your father again until I return you to him."

"Ok." Brian pulled his arm free and got up to follow Rengi out of Kwana's sitting room.

Rengi took him through a heavily populated section of the barge. It was a market place of sorts. A place where the inhabitants of the barge came to interact. There were games of chance to enjoy and a variety of food for sale. The atmosphere was filled with music, dancing, and laughter. Most of the people were Orions, but there were a few other races. Tellerites and Nausicans were there and several others that Brian could not identify.

"What are all these people doing here?" Brian asked as he looked around the crowd. The atmosphere was exciting. He wanted to know everything about it.

"Most live here." Rengi said. "Some are hiding like Captain Brady."

"Hiding?" Brian asked. He turned his attention from the crowd back to Rengi. "From who?"

"Some from their own governments. Some from Starfleet. Some from others like themselves." Rengi explained. "We offer safe haven for a price. Now, may I ask you a question?"

"Sure." He smiled at the girl.

"Why are you with Captain Brady and what does he have against your father?" Rengi asked

"Brady did not know I was on his ship when he left Starbase 18." Brian said. "I don't know the answer to your other question."

"I have never met a human boy before." Rengi said. "Only adults."

"I've never met any Orions." Brian said. "You are not what I expected."

"Why?" She asked. Brian blushed but didn't answer. His attention was caught by a group of men gambling in a circle on the floor of the market place. The game involved throwing pyramid shaped dice. Brian and Rengi watched but the game went so fast that they could not

follow it.

When they tired of watching the game they continue on their way. Brian stopped at the edge of a small crowd. He craned his neck to look over the shoulder of a man. He caught a glimpse of a dark haired green woman dancing to the music of some type of flute. Rengi did not bother to watch. She pulled him away from the crowd by the sleeve.

"That is what you expected." Rengi said.

"I guess." Brian shrugged his shoulders. "I've heard stories."

"I'm sure." Rengi said walking away from him. "I've heard stories about human's too."

"Like what?" Brian asked catching up with her. She just kept walking. Brian grabbed her hand and pulled her to a stop. "What do you hear about humans?"

"They are tricky." Rengi said. "They use words to confuse and distract, then they take what they want."

"That's not true!"

"Maybe." Rengi shrugged. She continued walking. "But what you have heard is also not true."

"Hey, Rengi." Brian followed after her. He could not explain why he did not want this girl to be angry at him, but it felt important to him. "Wait up. Want to see something?"

"What?"

"I need some place quiet to show you. With a table." Brian said.

"A table?"

"At least something to lean on." Brian said. He lowered his voice and leaned close to her when he said, "Come on, I bet you got a special place around here. One no one else knows about."

"I have a place." Rengi studied him for a minute. "This way."

Brian followed her out of the market place and down a hallway of the barge. She led him to a ladder. When the hallway was empty she went up telling Brian to follow quickly before anyone saw them. The ladder ended at a bulkhead. Rengi touched the control pad on the hatch and it slid open. When they were through, Brian closed the hatch behind them.

"Where are we?" Brian asked.

"This repair tube accesses the weapons systems of the Haven." Rengi said. She stepped off the ladder and crawled down the tube. When Brian caught up with her they were in a small chamber formed by the intersection of two tubes. Another ladder ran perpendicular to them. A catwalk rimmed the tube that ladder was coming up. Rengi sat on the catwalk. "No one is ever up here."

"I can see why." Brian smiled as he sat next to her. He looked down. One wrong move and he could easily fall six decks or more

"No table." Rengi said. "Is this ledge enough to lean on?"

"Yeah." Brian said turning sideways on the catwalk so he could lean on the ledge behind them. "Perfect."

"So?" Rengi asked. "Show me."

Brian opened one of his vest pockets and pulled out a blank piece of paper. Out of another pocket he took several small pencils. He selected one and put the others away. "This is called a pencil. They aren't used much on Earth anymore except by artists."

"Are you an artist, Brian?" Rengi asked wide eyed.

"Maybe." Brian said. He started to draw a likeness of Rengi. "I'm not sure yet. This isn't exactly the right color green. I mostly use it for trees and grass when I draw landscapes. But I like drawing people better."

"Green trees?"

"On Earth." Brian explained. "Most of the plant life is green."

"Really?" Rengi asked. Brian nodded. He was concentrating on his drawing. He retrieved another pencil from his pocket. Rengi watched with fascination. After a few minutes, she asked, "Do you miss Earth, Brian?"

"Naw." Brian continued to draw as they talked. "I'll be back there again soon enough. I do miss my grandfather. That's who I live with when I'm there."

"What is a grandfather?"

"My mother's father." Brian explained. "Don't your parents have parents?"

"Yes." She smiled. "In my language they are Manka and Manjsa. I have never heard the standard words for them."

"Yeah, grandfather is standard." Brian smiled. "On Earth I just call him Pop. There. Done. Do you like it?"

"Brian!" Rengi said in awe. "You make me pretty."

"You are pretty."

"Can I keep it?"

"Sure." Brian smiled.

"It's getting late." Rengi said. "We better get back before someone comes looking for us."

"Which way?" Brian asked.

When they got back to the marketplace, Brian saw Captain Brady obviously looking for him. When he saw the two kids coming through the crowd he stopped. He crossed his arms across his chest and waited.

"Where have you been?" Brady asked.

"What does it matter?" Brian answered.

"Kid, I didn't ask you along for this ride. But you are here and we need to get a few things straight." Brady grabbed Brian by the back of his collar.

"Captain Brady." Rengi smiled sweetly. She held up the picture. "Look what Brian made for me."

"It's very nice Rengi. But I believe your mother is looking for you." Brady's tone to her was much calmer than the one he was using with Brian.

"Oh, thank you." She said to Brady. She immediately started through the crowd, but looked over her shoulder to call "Bye Brian."

Brian could not help but smile at her as she walked away. When she was gone, Brady loosened his grip on Brian. "So that's what you were up to."

"What'd you think?"

"I guess I was thinking the worse." Brady admitted. He knew there was something in the chemistry of Orion women that made them almost irresistible to human men. "You being sixteen and her a princess. You could get us in a lot of trouble here, Brian."

"She's just a kid." Brian protested.

"Actually she's almost as old as you. Orion women just... " Brady searched for the right words. He decided it was not the right time for an exo-biology lesson. "... develop differently. Come on."

"Where are we going?"

"Back to the ship." Brady said hurrying along the hall. "We need to talk where I can be sure of the security system."

They walked in silence back to the landing bay. When they were inside the Sly Fox, Brady closed and locked the hatch. He checked with the computer to make sure they were isolated from the rest of the barge.

"I guess we're safe." Brian said sarcastically.

"You didn't tell anyone who your father is, did you?" Brady asked.

"No!" Brian sulked. "I heard you before."

"Good!" Brady said. "Rule number one while you are with me is never give any information away!"

"I didn't say anything."

"You told Kwana that her assumption about our relationship was wrong." Brady said. "That made her curious. I can't afford to have anyone question my dealings where Starfleet is concerned."

"What are your dealings with Starfleet?"

"It's none of your business, Kid! Do you hear me?!" Brady said emphatically. "All I need from you is silence."

Brian stared at him sullenly. After a minute he asked. "Now what?"

"I was going to leave you here while I took care of my business." Brady said. "But that doesn't seem like such a good idea anymore."

"Good. I didn't want to be left behind."

"I don't know or care what you want, Kid."

On Excelsior Admiral Sulu and Commander Chekov were in Sulu's office. He called the Pegasus on the Captains channel. The channel was always secured and generally answered in privacy. Captain Higgins answered in his office. "Admiral Sulu. What can I do for you?"

"I'm sorry to bother you, Jack." Sulu said. "But I have a problem. And I need to talk to your first officer immediately."

"Yes Sir." Higgins said. "Gonzoles, report to my ready room. Admiral, if this is a private matter...."

"No Captain." Sulu smiled. "Just a family matter. My son is missing."

"Admiral Sulu." Gonzoles turned the screen towards her. "Brian?"

"Who else?" Sulu said. "I understand you talked to him yesterday. Do you have any idea where he went?"

"No Sir. But he was asking me about Matthew Brady." Gonzoles said. "And a Barolian trader. Rummel, I think."

"What did you tell him, Commander?"

"That Matthew was in business for himself and any more than that he should ask you, Admiral." Gonzoles said.

"Unfortunately he did not follow your advise, Gonzoles. Thank you." Sulu nodded to her. "Captain Higgins."

"Sir."

"What is your present course?"

"We are on course for Rigel XII to deliver medical supplies to the mining operations, Sir." Captain Higgins said.

"If you come across a small ship called the Sly Fox, detain it." Sulu ordered. "Arrest Mr. Brady and inform me immediately."

"The charge, Admiral?" Captain Higgins asked.

"Kidnaping."

"Sir!" Gonzoles objected. "Matthew would never--"

"Kidnaping, Commander." Sulu left no room for dissension. "Sulu out."

"A kidnaping charge will never hold up, Hikaru." Chekov said. "Brady would have no reason to take Brian against his will."

"You're right, Pavel." Sulu said. "I don't know exactly where Brady is, but he is going to have to make several stops. If Brian is with him he won't be able to keep it a secret. The charges will be dropped but they will give us a reason to pick him up and get Brian back without exposing Brady."

"And what will you tell Jimmi?" Chekov asked.

"That I've got the whole fleet looking for him." Sulu said. He opened the comline. "Commander Rand, I need to talk to Captain Uhura."

"Aye Sir."

"We stay here?" Chekov asked.

"For the time being." Sulu nodded. "If Brady avoids everyone who is looking for him, he knows we are here."

"Then why don't we just let him come to us?" Chekov asked. "Why the search parties?"

"We've got to make it look good, Pavel. I can't charge the man with kidnaping and not look for him." Sulu said. "If any of Brady's contacts even suspect he's made a deal with us, he's dead."

"And Brian with him." Chekov added. Sulu nodded. "And if Jimmi ever finds out what is going on.... "

"I doubt that she would ever forgive me." Sulu said.

"You did not put Brian in harm's way."

"I know, but Jimmi will not see it that way." The Admiral said. Captain Uhura's face appeared on his desk top screen. Sulu smiled. "Captain Uhura. Are you still in position?"

"We are, Admiral." Uhura returned his smile. "All's quiet on this end. And you?"

"We've encountered and searched a freighter bound for Remus outpost four." Sulu said. Commander Johnson came into the office. Chekov got up and consulted quietly with Johnson while the Admiral continued with his conversation. "It was owned and operated by a Barolian named Rumml."

"Seems I've heard that name before." Uhura said. "Did you find anything?"

"Nothing yet." Sulu said. "But I have other news. Brian is missing from Starbase Eighteen."

"Missing? I'm sorry Hikaru." Uhura's tone and expression changed from all business to concerned in an instant. "Do you have any idea where he is?"

"I suspect he is with Matthew Brady and I've issued an order to arrest him on charges of kidnaping." Sulu said. "So keep your eyes open for him."

"Of course." Uhura said. "But what could Brady's reasons be?"

"I haven't a clue. Sulu out." The Admiral said and closed the connection to the Dodger. He turned his attention back to business and asked, "What have you come up with, Mr. Johnson?"

"We've gotten some odd readings of the containers that Rumml was using to carry his liquor, Sir." Johnson said. "I've never seen anything like them."

"Chekov?"

"They look vaguely familiar, but I can not put my finger on it." Chekov said studying the padd Johnson had brought in with him. "I will run a computer comparison. But just looking at it I doubt it could be used to hide data."

"But you did not find the information Brady planted?" Sulu asked.

"No Sir." Johnson said. "It was not in the main computer. And I couldn't find any data storage units on the ship. We did a thorough search Admiral."

"Thank you, Mr. Johnson. Dismissed." Sulu said. Johnson left the Admiral's office. Sulu opened the comline again. "Commander Rand. Now my wife."

"Right away Admiral." Rand replied.

"I think I'll give you some privacy for this one." Chekov said on his way out.

"Coward." Sulu commented calmly much to Chekov's amusement. He waited for Jimmi to appear on his screen. She looked better than the last time he had talked to her. She was at least in control now. "Jeanie."

"About time." She said. "I have talked to everyone I could think of. There is still no sign of Brian. But where have you been? What have you been doing about this?"

"Jeanie, I am on a priority one mission." He said. "I am sorry that I can not just drop everything I am doing right now. But I have done what I could. I've made inquiries and I suspect that Brian is with Matthew Brady."

"Matthew would have called me if Brian was with him." Jimmi said.

"Maybe." Sulu said. "But Brady did not file a flight plan. We have no idea where he's gone."

"So what are you doing about it?"

"I have every ship from the neutral zone to the Rigel system looking for them." Sulu said.

"I will bring him back to you, Jeanie."

"What am I suppose to do in the mean time?" Jimmi asked. Her control was slipping. The words just seemed to catch in her throat. "Just sit here and wait?"

"Someone has to be there in case he calls." Sulu said. He seemed amazingly calm to her.

"And if you did go looking for him, where would you look?"

"I don't know." Jimmi's tears started again. "But I feel so helpless just waiting."

"I know, Baby, I know." Her husband whispered. He took a deep breath. "Have you talked to your father?"

"Yes. He hasn't heard from Brian." her voice cracked as she tried not to cry. "He's on his way here now."

"Good." he said. "At least you won't be alone."

"Damn it Harry. You should be here."_

"I would if I could." Sulu said. He was fighting his own frustrations no matter how calm he seemed to her. "And I will be as soon as I can. But right now I have to go. It will be ok, Jeanie."

"Do you promise?" Jimmi asked knowing full well she had no right to ask. After all they had an agreement between them not to make any promises that could be broken.

"I promise to do everything within my power to bring our boy home." Sulu said. "What else can I say, Baby?"

"How about I love you?"

"You know I do." he smiled.

"I know." she sighed. "Be careful, Harry."

"Always." He said. "I'll talk to you again soon. Excelsior out."