

"Duty log: update." Commander Sulu sat in the command chair on the bridge of the Enterprise. It was the middle of a very routine third shift. "Enterprise remains on course for Starbase Fourteen at warp five. Life support reports maintenance check level four is complete. All systems show ready."

"Mr. Sulu." Lt. Dierkop was the communications officer on duty. He was a small lean man with light hair and light eyes. "I am receiving a distress call from U.S.S. Sydney. Audio only, Sir."

"Let's hear it, Dierkop." Sulu turned the command chair towards communications.

"Aye."

"This is Captain Rohner of the U.S.S. Sydney." A male voice issued the distress call. "We have lost warp drive. Request emergency assistance. We are carrying critical medical supplies for Galla Three."

"How long, Ensign Lafferty?"

"At warp nine, twenty six hours." The young man at the navigation station answered.

Sulu turned to the science officer. She always struck Sulu as exotic. Her features were definitely asian, probably Chinese Sulu thought, but her skin color was a deep ginger brown. In Hikaru Sulu's opinion, it was a very appealing combination. "Lt. Xiang, what are the stats on the Sydney?"

"She's a small science vessel which can also be configured as a troop transport and freighter." Xiang reported. "The first in her class, she carries a crew of two hundred and fifty. No passengers listed at present."

"Is anyone else in the area, Xiang?"

She consulted her scanners and logs before shaking her head. "No Sir. We are the only ship that could be there in less than three days time."

"Sulu to Admiral Kirk." Sulu opened the senior officer's comline. Knowing the admiral was probably asleep, Sulu waited a minute and repeated his call.

Finally Kirk answered. "Kirk here."

"Admiral." Sulu said. "We have received distress call from the U.S.S. Sydney. She's lost warp power and is carrying critical medical supplies for Galla Three. We are the only ship in the area and could respond in twenty six hours."

"All right, Sulu." Kirk said. "Alter course. Kirk out."

"Set course for the coordinates of the Sydney, Mr. Lafferty." Sulu said. "Warp nine, Mr. Bonsall. Lt. Dierkop, hail the Sydney."

"Channel open, Mr. Sulu." Dierkop said.

"U.S.S. Sydney." Sulu said. "This is the Enterprise. We will rendezvous with you in approximately twenty six hours. Do you have any wounded?"

"We should receive a reply in a few minutes, Sir." Dierkop said.

"Put it on audio as soon as we have it." Sulu said.

"Aye." Dierkop nodded. They waited two and a half minutes.

"Enterprise." Captain Rohner called. "Injuries are minor. But we are carrying herclyne-adlocoine for the epidemic on Galla Three. It is imperative that it get there as soon as possible. We are holding position awaiting your arrival. Sydney out."

"Mr. Dierkop, relay the Sydney's transmission to sick bay." Sulu ordered. "Tell them to be ready to take over the Sydney's medical mission."

"Aye, Mr. Sulu." Dierkop nodded.

Sulu recorded the change of course and speed in the duty log, along with the reason for the change. He then sent a copy of the duty log to the engineering staff on duty so they could get ready to assist in any repairs. He also sent copies to Spock, McCoy, Scotty, Uhura, and Chekov so they would be up to speed when they came on duty at change of shift.

"Good morning." Admiral Kirk said as he walked into the briefing room at the beginning of the first shift. The senior staff was assembled for a meeting Kirk had called just a half an hour earlier. McCoy had been standing between Chekov and Uhura telling a joke when Kirk arrived. He stopped in mid-sentence and sat down. "I assume that everyone is aware of the change in course. When will we rendezvous with the Sydney?"

"Approximately eighteen hours, Admiral." Sulu said. "She still has impulse power and is now moving towards us at her best speed."

"How did she lose warp power?" Kirk asked.

"I've been in touch with the Sydney's chief engineer." Scotty said. "According to her there was a failure in the matter-antimatter integrator. It was just one of those things. No warning. I checked on their maintenance procedures. They are up to standard."

"How long to fix it, Scotty?"

"I have what they need." Scotty said. "Once they have the parts, maybe eight hours. Half that time if we stay around to help them out. After that I recommend the Sydney go directly to a full service ship yards for complete maintenance check."

"What about their medical mission?" Kirk asked.

"Galla Three is experiencing an outbreak of a virus that is closely related to Huxley Disease." McCoy said "Herclyne-adlocoine has been successful in fighting Huxley on populations with similar physiologies. Unchecked this virus could devastate one third of the planet's population."

"Galla Three has just been accepted into the Federation in the last year." Spock added. "Their location close to the Romulan Neutral Zone makes the system a strategically important."

"Chekov, how far is the rendezvous point from Galla Three?" Kirk asked.

"At top speed we could be in orbit in five hours." Chekov reported.

"Bones, is there a deadline on the use of this drug?" Kirk asked. "Anything special needed for its transport?"

"As long as the herclyne-adlocoine is kept at ten degrees Celsius, we won't run into any problems." McCoy said. "At a higher temperature, it will start to break down and become totally useless after about twenty four hours. How quickly that happens depends on the temperature. But I am more concerned with just how fast I can start administering it."

"The sooner the better, I'm sure." Kirk said.

"Herclyne-adlocoine has never been used on the Gallans. Only on similar species. And this is not the Huxley virus, just one that is acting like it." McCoy explained. "I'll need to

monitor the situation closely. There is a small possibility the Gallans will not respond to the treatment."

"Is there anything else?" Admiral Kirk asked. No one had anything else to offer. "All right. I want senior staff on duty when we reach the Sydney. Adjust your schedules accordingly. That's all. Dismissed."

Spock, McCoy, and Kirk waited until the rest of the senior staff left the briefing room. McCoy asked. "How is this going to effect Sulu's time table, Jim?"

"Mr. Sulu would be the last one to put his career ahead of a rescue mission." Spock said.

"I'm not asking him to." McCoy said when he turned to Spock. "But he had to miss it the last time he was scheduled for this seminar. I'd hate to see that happen again."

"That's why I haven't told him about it yet." Kirk said. "Anyway, I spoke to Captain Kelly on the Crocket. He'll wait as long as he can. But we basically have to get Sulu to Starbase Fourteen in forty eight hours if he's going to make the seminar."

"If we leave an engineering team on the Sydney with the necessary spare parts and continue to Galla Three." Spock said. "That would give us at least seven hours at Galla Three before we would have to return to Starbase."

"Is that enough time, Bones?" Kirk asked.

"No. I simply need more time to monitor." McCoy said. "But if I had a couple of med techs and a full field lab kit, I'd be done by the time you came back from Starbase Fourteen to get me."

"All right." Kirk nodded. "We'll do it that way."

Third shift brought the senior staff on duty. It was two hours into the shift when Spock reported. "Admiral, I have the Sydney on short range sensors."

"Hail her, Uhura."

"Aye Sir." Uhura nodded, "Channel open Admiral."

"Sydney, this is James T. Kirk of Enterprise." Kirk said. Captain Rohner appeared on the main screen. "An engineering team with the parts you require stands by to assist with your repairs."

"Thank you, Admiral." Rohner smiled. "I understand from you chief medical officer that you wish to transfer the herclyne-adlocoine to Enterprise for delivery to Galla Three."

"Yes." Kirk nodded. "Since time is of the essence, we will leave a repair crew with you and take on the medical supplies. Are you ready for transfer?"

"Yes Sir." Rohner nodded. "We are standing by."

"We will advise when we are in transporter range." Kirk said. "Kirk out."

When they were relieved at the end of third shift, Sulu and Chekov stepped onto the turbo lift together. Chekov asked. "What was that all about? We were only in orbit long enough for Dr. McCoy to beam down and now we are on our way back to Starbase Fourteen at top speed. What is so important?"

"I don't know." Sulu shrugged. "I guess we'll find out when we get there. I'm starving."

What's for dinner tonight?"

"I hate third shift." Chekov complained. They got off the lift and headed for the mess hall. "I feel like I should be eating breakfast."

"It's all the same Pav." Sulu laughed. "How many years have you lived on this ship? And you still hang onto a concept of day and night?"

"I usually work first shift." Chekov insisted. "I am used to first shift."

"It is all in your mind, Pavel." Sulu said. "But if it makes you feel any better, eat breakfast."

"I think I will."

They were just sitting down to their meal when Admiral Kirk's voice came over the shipwide comline. "Commander Sulu, report to my quarters."

"Damn." Sulu looked down at his untouched meal. He got up, grabbed a piece of toast off Chekov's plate and answered the call, "Sulu here. On my way."

Commander Sulu reported to the Admiral's quarters. He had been there many times before. With his senior officers, Jim Kirk used his quarters pretty much as his office. With junior officers he generally used one of Enterprise's smaller briefing rooms. It was a design oversight that most department heads had offices on the Enterprise but the ship's captain did not.

"Sit down, Sulu." Admiral Kirk said. He was sitting at his desk reading a report. As usual the lights in Kirk's sleeping quarters behind his desk were dimmed. The Admiral did not have much in his cabin in the way of decoration. He liked the idea of being able to fit all possessions in one suitcase. Sulu sat in the chair opposite his captain and waited. "We are on course for Starbase Fourteen."

"Yes Sir." Sulu nodded. Having just come off duty at the ship's helm, he knew exactly what course the ship was on.

"We are going to drop you off there." Kirk continued. "You have four days to report to the Academy."

"The Academy, Admiral?" Sulu asked a bit surprised.

"I signed you up for Admiral Reese's command seminar." Kirk explained. "Five or six days of discussing command strategies with a handful of commanders who are also ready to move up to captain."

Sulu thought about that for a minute before he asked. "Sir, should I look at this more as an opportunity to learn from my peers' experience or an opportunity to influence Admiral Reese's decisions regarding command assignments?"

"Just think of it as an opportunity, Commander." Kirk smiled. But Sulu was right. Rear Admiral Reese would be paying careful attention. "The U.S.S. Crocket is at the starbase now. She'll take you to Earth. I imagine Jean Marie will be thrilled with this news."

"I think I'll surprise her." Sulu smiled at the thought. He explained, "She wasn't very happy when my last leave was cancelled on short notice."

"I know." Kirk laughed. "She sent me an impassioned letter requesting that I arrange all diplomatic crises so that they don't interfere with your vacation schedule."

"I think I got the same letter." Sulu laughed. He had come to terms with the fact that his

girl friend considered his commanding officer a second father years ago. "I better go pack. I believe we will be at Starbase 14 by 13:00 hours."

"Thank Jean Marie for me." Kirk nodded. He always called McCoy's daughter by her full name although she preferred her nickname, Jimmi. "She sent me her recent research on the twentieth century. I found it very interesting."

"I will, Admiral." Sulu said as he left Kirk's quarters. Sulu returned to the mess hall to find Uhura had joined Chekov. Even though they were finished eating, Sulu picked up a fresh dinner tray and joined his friends. Uhura was sipping an Andonian tea, a recent favorite of hers.

"I don't know how you can drink that vile brew." Chekov was saying as Sulu sat down. "It is not possible to add enough sugar to sweeten it."

"I like it." Uhura shrugged. She looked over at Sulu. "That didn't take long."

"The Admiral signed me up for a seminar at the Academy." Sulu explained with a broad grin. "I'm on my way to Earth as soon as we reach Starbase 14."

"How long will you be gone?" Uhura asked.

"With travel time, probably about ten days. Maybe twelve." Sulu said and turned his attention to his fish dinner.

"And what did the Princess have to say about that?" Chekov asked using his pet name for Dr. McCoy's younger daughter. Chekov had met Jimmi McCoy when she was a shy teenager and Chekov an ensign just out of the Academy. They had been close friends ever since.

"I am not going to tell her." Sulu said.

"Uh huh." Uhura looked over her tea cup at him. "You are going to San Francisco and you expect us to believe that you are not going to see Jimmi?"

"I said I am not going to tell her I'm coming. I am just going to show up on her doorstep." Sulu said confidently. "Jimmi likes surprises."

"And you can check up on her that way." Chekov added.

"I don't need to check up on her." Sulu said. For four years Sulu had maintained a subspace relationship with Jimmi McCoy. But Chekov was still waiting for it to blow up in his face. "Unless she is telling you something she is not telling me."

"No. She has not said anything." Chekov admitted and drank his coffee. He did not wish trouble on them. Hikaru Sulu was his best friend, but Jimmi McCoy was like a little sister. Pavel Chekov did not want to see her get hurt again.

Sulu walked into his quarters and went directly to his closet. He did not even see the box on his bunk until he had pulled his duffle out to pack. Sulu stopped to examine it. It was the kind of box used for shipping fragile items. It was small enough to fit in his duffle bag and was so light that Sulu thought it might be empty. A computer padd lay on the bunk next to it. He picked up the padd and turned it on. The recording was made by Dr. McCoy.

"Hikaru, please deliver this box to my little girl when you see her. She's left its contents in my cabin since she really was a little girl and I think it is time she had it. Enjoy your seminar. And your time on Earth. I'll see you in a couple of weeks."