

At Ambassador Muldaur's request, only Admiral Kirk and Admiral Coster attended the meeting on Starbase 39-Sierra. Kirk had forwarded the relevant files from the database to Coster as soon as Spock had accessed the database. While Kirk transported over to the base, Coster reviewed the interrogation of Bartell.

"The Ambassador hasn't arrived?" Kirk asked when he walked in and found Admiral Coster alone in his office. The room itself was standard command issue. A desk stood in the center of the room with full computer access. The office was large enough to make room for a small informal seating group. Admiral Coster was an avid gardener and several plants flourished in his office.

"He'll be along in a minute, Jim." Coster picked up a coffee decanter and filled a mug while he said. "He has been in a meeting with Ambassador Matru for the last couple of hours. I'm not so sure how long he can stall the Romulans. Coffee?"

"Thanks." Kirk nodded and sat down. Coster handed Kirk the full steaming mug. "Bartell suggested the Romulans know about the Tegra."

"Yes." Coster said. "I've just finished viewing your interrogation. You don't think Ambassador Matru is going to admit to knowing who they are. Do you?"

"We should at least ask." Kirk said.

"You can't." Ambassador Muldaur said from the doorway. Both admirals stood up and faced the tall imposing ambassador. "The subject of the Tegra is off limits."

"Why?" Kirk asked.

"This is a politically sensitive area, Kirk." Muldaur spoke softly as he stopped in front of Kirk. "There will be no blundering into things you know nothing about."

"But you know about it." Kirk said.

"Yes."

"And?"

Dolyn Muldaur studied Kirk. He had only met the man socially but his reputation was formidable. And part of that reputation was for taking matters into his own hands. Admiral Coster turned away from the other two to look out his view port at the Enterprise in orbit. He already knew what the Ambassador had to say. Finally Muldaur sighed. "What I am about to tell you does not leave this room."

"Understood." Kirk said.

"The Tegra's home planet is three light years inside Romulan Space." Muldaur's words were steady and measured. "They call it Ethley. The Romulans are aware of them but have not been able to pin point their location."

"The invisibility screens." Kirk said.

"Yes." Muldaur relaxed a bit. He turned away from Kirk and sat at one of the chairs facing the desk.

"Which is why you wanted the Romulan crew here right away." Kirk continued to stand, looking down at the Ambassador. "You were afraid we would find out and ask them about it."

"Yes." Muldaur said.

"You knew, Nick." Kirk asked Admiral Coster's back.

Coster sighed and turned back to the people in his office. "I had some intelligence reports, Jim. But until yesterday, I had never heard of the Tegra."

"Do the Romulans know the Tegra are behind the mine fields?" Kirk asked

"I suspect that they suspect." Muldaur said.

"But you haven't asked them?" Kirk said.

"No." Muldaur said. "I have not given Matru any indication that I have ever heard of the Tegra. And I will not. The Federation is trying to establish a covert contact with them."

"They are not on our side of the Zone." Kirk pointed out.

"That can be remedied."

"You are serious." Kirk stated flatly.

"Yes."

"And if the Romulans bring up the subject of the Tegra?" Kirk asked.

"You've never heard of them." Muldaur said. "Is that understood, Admiral?"

"Yes Ambassador." Kirk said. "If there is nothing else."

Admiral Kirk marched out before either man could object. He passed the station's junior officers without a glance. His stern expression kept anyone from approaching him. He returned to Enterprise and his quarters.

Kirk accessed the bridge communications station. He spoke quickly. His tone all business. "Uhura. I want a secure channel to Ambassador Carly Lightfoot. Starbase 68."

"Aye Sir." Uhura answered.

"Hello Jim." Carly smiled on his cabin's view screen. Her large black eyes shone as she smiled at him. "I am glad you decided to call personally this time."

But Kirk was not in the mood. He did not bother with a greeting. "Rilyn Heren-tre."

"What brings on this foul mood?" Carly asked taken aback by his tone.

"Rilyn Heren-tre." Kirk repeated.

"Rilyn." Carly sighed and absentmindedly fingered the beaded necklace she wore. "Let's see. He's a younger brother in his family. That means he must make his own way. Inheritance goes to the first born in the Mirta culture. He has two sisters and a brother also serving in the military. His uncle has recently been assigned to the diplomatic office that sends a representative to the Federation council. Other than that I don't know anything about him."

"Find out." Kirk said.

"Is that an order, Admiral?"

Finally Kirk softened. "Please Carly. Help me out."

"Of course, Jim." Her teasing tone turned to one of concern. "Anything I can do."

"I need to know what is going on between the Mirta and the Tegra." Kirk spoke softly.

"And I am not getting any real answers from Muldaur."

"Oh, I see." Carly sat back in her chair and studied Kirk. "I'll see what I can do. And you are going to owe me big time."

Kirk smiled at her. "Anything. Just name it."

"Let me see what I can find out first." Carly smiled. "Then we'll see what it's worth."

Kirk nodded. "Enterprise out."

