

"Polonium, Mr. Spock." Chekov looked up from his analysis and smiled. Spock and Chekov had been working on finding a way around the invisibility screen for several hours. The Enterprise was now only thirty minutes from the third planet in the G-582 System.

Spock looked up from the readings he had been studying. "Explain."

"I put the readings through a standard Curie analysis of the radio active spectrum." Chekov adjusted the controls so that his analysis came up on the small screen at the second science station. Spock came over to look over Chekov's shoulder. "The planet has a high subterranean concentration of polonium. And it leaks through the invisibility screen."

"Interesting." Spock said. "Scan the rest of the northern hemisphere for the elevated readings."

"Aye Sir." Chekov nodded.

Spock walked down to Kirk in the center seat. "Admiral. Mr. Chekov has found elevated readings of polonium coming from the area we know had an invisibility screen. He is presently scanning for other locations with similar readings."

"Why would the screen cause elevated readings, Spock?" Kirk asked.

"On the planet the screen reflects the readings around it so that the sensors pick up a continuous reading." Spock explained. "But for unknown reasons polonium's radium decay leaks through the screen giving elevated radio active readings."

"Mr. Spock." Uhura turned her chair towards the command officers and asked. "Couldn't those readings also come from outcroppings of polonium?"

"Yes." Spock nodded. "This planet has an unusually large percentage of polonium just below the surface and some outcroppings would be expected."

"Any way for us to distinguish between an invisibility screen and an outcropping?" Kirk asked.

"Not to my knowledge." Spock said. "Except of course by visual inspection."

"The invisibility screen is not effective on the planet?" Kirk asked.

"The screens we have seen so far only are effective in one direction." Spock said.

"Logically that direction from the surface is up. Someone on the planet should be able to see the receiver."

"Chekov." Kirk got up and walked over towards the science station. From the lower bridge he asked. "How many of these areas of elevated readings have you found?"

"Four so far, Admiral." Chekov glanced over his shoulder at Kirk. "I will be done in another minute."

"So we will have to visually check each of these sights." Kirk said. "I don't like the idea of dropping shields for transport or to exposing personnel to the danger of being on the surface when I don't know where that Romulan cruiser is. Chekov?"

"Five sights within the area that could hold the receiver." Chekov turned his chair towards the center of the bridge to report. "Three are in a five kilometer radius. Two are six hundred kilometers to the south. Also within five kilometers of each other."

"Sulu, you'll be in command. Keep a sharp eye for the battle cruiser." Kirk said quickly.

"Jim." Spock's soft use of his first name made him stop and face the Vulcan. "You can not expose yourself to possible capture by the Romulans."

"I wasn't planning on getting captured." Kirk gave Spock one of his most self effacing

smiles.

"Of course." Spock said. "However with recent developments and restrictions and your knowledge of them..."

"Damn. You're right, Spock." Kirk gave in reluctantly. He paced across the lower bridge letting a new plan formulate in his mind. "Sulu, ETA?"

"Eighteen minutes."

"We'll have to keep the number of people on the planet to a minimum." Kirk said. "One officer to check out each reading. Sulu. Chekov. You've just volunteered."

"Aye Sir." Each answered.

"Take Xiang, Hauser, and Suri." Kirk said. "Uhura, call them to the transporter room."

"Aye Sir." Uhura said and turned to her station to follow her orders.

Kirk returned to the command chair. "Spock, any sign of the cruiser?"

Spock returned to the science station and took a quick reading. "None."

"Can you scan for Romulans on the planet's surface?" Kirk asked.

"We will be close enough in five minutes." Spock said.

"Sulu, Chekov. Brief the rest of your team. Keep phasers set on stun. Don't take any chances but try not to start a war." Kirk said. "We will advise you of any problems in the area before you beam down."

"Aye Sir." Sulu said and locked his station. He and Chekov got on the turbo lift together.

"What do you think the new development and restrictions are?" Chekov asked.

"I don't know." Sulu said. "But it is obviously top secret. Part of that meeting the Admiral went to on the base."

"I doubt there is much we know that the Romulans don't." Chekov said. "Except for our access to Bartell and the database, they've had similar experiences. Must have drawn similar conclusions."

"From what I understand." Sulu said. "They did not get much from the pirate. Just a few names."

"The names came from Brady's database." Chekov said. "I don't think Bartell gave them anything."

"I wouldn't put it past Brady to put more than one receiver on the planet." Sulu said.

"Why?"

"Decoys." Sulu shrugged. "It seems like Brady's style."

"You have a point." Chekov agreed.

"Spock?" Kirk asked.

"There are Romulans on the surface." Spock studied his sensors. "Twenty. Four in the vicinity of each possible receiver sight."

"Isn't there any way we can draw them away from the areas we want to check?" McCoy asked.

Kirk turned to McCoy and smiled. "That's a good idea, Bones. Ensign Lebowitz. Target the center of the circle that the three polonium sights form and the distance half way between the other two sights. Stand by."

"Aye Sir." Lebowitz answered from the helm station.

"Kirk to Sulu."

"Sulu here." He stood in the transporter room surrounded by the away team. Lt Hauser handed out phasers. She was a couple of inches taller than Sulu and wore her light brown hair almost as short as his. Ensign Suri was a tall lean man with the dark hair, eyes, and complexion characteristic of his native New Delhi. He double checked his tricorder, more at ease with his computer than his crewmates. Chekov and Lt. Xiang were going over the readings of the sight she was assigned to investigate.

"There are Romulans on the surface." Kirk said. "We are going to fire on a point near the sights you will investigate to draw the Romulans away. No doubt at least one officer will be left to guard anything that is there. You will simultaneously beam down to a point where you can approach the sight unobserved. Determine if the receiver is present, take possession, and return to the ship as soon as possible."

"I understand, Admiral." Sulu said. As the rest of the landing party followed Sulu to the transporter pad, he said. "If we need to contact each other on the surface, use encoded pulsating frequencies. The Romulans on the surface may not pick it up."

Scotty was manning the controls for the complicated transport that would set all five officers down in different locations at the same time. He opened the comline to the bridge. "We are ready when you are, Admiral."

"Energize, Mr. Scott." Kirk ordered. As the five officers dematerialized, Kirk said. "Fire, Mr. Lebowitz."

"The controlled phaser fire is having the desired effect, Admiral." Spock reported while watching the sensors. "The Romulans are moving to investigate."

Ensign Lebowitz tensed as the main view screen shimmered and the image of a large Romulan ship started to take shape. He spoke louder than he intended when he reported. "Romulan battle cruiser decloaking."

"Red alert." Kirk ordered. "Raise shields. Bring all weapons to full strength."

"Admiral." Uhura called over the commotion of the bridge coming to battle stations. "The Romulans are hailing us."

Kirk turned his chair to look at Uhura. She shrugged. Kirk nodded. "On screen."

A bulky Romulan man with greying hair appeared on the screen. His voice was deep and gruff as it came through the universal translator. "I am Judar, commanding the Ramakam. Any further aggression against this planet by the Enterprise will be considered an act of war against the Romulan Star Empire."

"We are in Federation space." Kirk reminded the Romulan. "You have no right to even be here. Withdraw from this system."

"I have safe passage from your government, Kirk." Judar said.

"While you are escorting Ambassador Matru." Kirk said.

"What would your Ambassador think of your attack on Romulan citizens on the planet's surface?" Judar countered.

"I did not attack any Romulan citizens. My target was specifically to an uninhabited area." Kirk said. "I like my weapons officers to keep their skills sharp."

"Your target was within two kilometers of my crew." Judar protested.

"Were any of your crew injured or killed?" Kirk asked.

"No." Judar reluctantly agreed. "It would seem your weapons officer needs more practice."

"To the contrary." Kirk said. "He hit precisely what he targeted."

"Admiral." Spock said. Kirk turned to Uhura and nodded to her. She cut off the audio transmission. Kirk turned back to Spock. "Mr. Sulu, Mr. Chekov, and Lt. Xiang have each disappeared from the sensors."

"The other two?" Kirk asked.

"Lt. Hauser and Ensign Suri are in the areas of the elevated readings but have not passed under any invisibility screens." Spock said.

"Hauser reports an outcropping of polonium." Uhura added. "Suri, checking in now. He also has an outcropping. Neither reported any Romulan contact."

"Tell them to stand by we'll beam them up as soon as possible." Kirk said.

"Aye Sir."

When Kirk turned his attention back to main screen, a junior officer was reporting to Judar. The Romulan commander waved her away and Kirk nodded to Uhura to reestablish contact.

"Judar." Kirk said. "You will return to Starbase 39-Sierra. You are in violation of the treaty to be here."

"I have crew members on the surface." Judar said.

"I'll return them to Starbase for you." Kirk said.

"Unacceptable."

"Mr. Lebowitz." Kirk said. "Arm photon torpedoes. Target Ramakam's weapons systems."

"Aye Sir." Lebowitz said. The Romulan Battle Cruiser Ramakam disappeared from the screen.

Lt. Commander Chekov lay on his stomach and peered carefully over the slight rise in the uneven landscape. Three Romulan officers surrounded a cargo box similar to the one that housed the database left by Brady. They were speaking quickly in their native language and scanning the box. Chekov also scanned the box. It contained imaging components consistent with the invisibility screen, but no indication of any communications abilities.

One of the Romulans pounded his fist on the top of the box. The top slid open. The three Romulans involuntarily jumped back when a holographic image of the pirate Brady jumped out at them.

"Don't know what you are looking for." The hologram laughed. "But this isn't it."

The image of the hologram sputtered, fizzled, and disappeared. Chekov backed away, staying as close to the ground as he could. As soon as he was far enough down the hill that he could stand without being seen, Chekov jogged back towards the beam in point to signal Enterprise.

"Chekov to Enterprise."

"Uhura here. What have you got, Pavel?"

"Invisibility screen." Chekov said. "No receiver. Three Romulans looking it over. I'm ready to come home."

"Stand by." Uhura said.

While he waited, Chekov scanned for the Romulans. They hadn't noticed him yet. "Chekov." It was Kirk. "We want to bring everyone up at the same time to minimize the time shields are down. Keep clear of the Romulans on the surface. We'll bring you home soon."

"Aye Sir." Chekov changed to the pulsating frequencies on his communicator. "Chekov to Xiang."

"Xiang here." She answered speaking quietly.

"Have you reported to Enterprise?" Chekov asked.

"Yes Sir." Xiang said. "It was a decoy. A cloak but nothing else. I'm trying to avoid two Romulans. They seem to be concentrating on the box. I don't think they've scanned me."

"I am coming your way." Chekov said. "I'll rendezvous with you in about ten minutes."

"Mr. Chekov." Lt. Xiang called to him. He wiped the sweat off his forehead as she walked up to him. "Have you had any further contact with the ship?"

"No." Chekov shook his head slowly. "How's your oxygen?"

"Getting low." Xiang said. "You?"

"Low enough. I believe we should find some cover and sit down to conserve energy." Chekov said. "There's some shade on the other side of that ridge about ten meters back that way. Anything closer the way you came?"

"No Sir." Xiang said. Chekov turned and started slowly back the way he came. Xiang followed. They made no attempt to hurry. "Mr. Chekov. Were there Romulans at your sight?"

"Yes."

"Did they take any notice of your presence?" Xiang asked.

"No."

"Doesn't that seem odd to you?" Xiang said as they walked along. "Even if they were concentrating on their analysis of the device, you'd think they'd notice life signs on such a desolate planet."

"Yes," Chekov nodded. "It does seem odd. Even if they did not notice us, surely their ship took notice of our landing party beaming down."

"Perhaps they had orders to ignore us." Xiang suggested as they crossed over the ridge that Chekov had mentioned.

"They outnumber us on the planet four to one." Chekov shrugged. "Perhaps they just don't consider our landing party a threat."

"I find it disconcerting." Xiang sat down in the small amount of shade the ridge provided. Chekov sat down next to her. "I know what you mean."

Commander Sulu adjusted his oxygen pack's mask and held his phaser up and pointed it at the Romulan. "Stand back from the device."

The Romulan officer slowly turned towards him. The disruptor in her hand was pointed directly at him. "Good to see you, Commander Sulu. But you are a little late."

"Why do you say that, Solga?" Sulu asked as he slowly stepped over the uneven rocky ground towards her. "Back away from the device."

But the Romulan officer did not back up. She activated the communicator attached to the sleeve of her uniform. "Ready to transport."

"Unable to comply." Came across her communication beam. "There is a Federation Starship in orbit. Hold position."

"Can't beam up without decloaking." Sulu smiled.

"You can't beam up without dropping shields." Solga countered.

"Mexican standoff." Sulu shrugged.

"That did not translate." Solga said. "No matter. This communication device is the property of the Romulan Defense Force. You will withdraw from this area."

"That device received a signal while both our ships were in orbit at the base." Sulu countered. "It does not belong to you."

"Then who?" Solga challenged. "Surely not the Federation. Or you would have retrieved it when you arrested the pirate."

"Perhaps it belongs to the pirate, Bartell." Sulu stepped a bit closer to the receiver. "If so, we will need it as evidence in his trial."

"If not?"

"Maybe it belongs to the Della Mir." Sulu now stood as close to the device as Solga. She still had not stepped back. "Or perhaps the Tegra."

"The Tegra!" Solga could not help but laugh. She had to adjust her oxygen mask before she could continue talking. "Have you been researching Romulan myths, Commander?"

"Myth?" Sulu asked. "The pirate told us it was the Tegra that developed the cloaked mines."

"He lied." Solga said. "The Tegra do not exist. It is a child's story."

"We seem to have time." Sulu smiled. "Tell me the myth."

"I don't see the point to that." Solga frowned. "You are just trying to distract me until the rest of your team joins us."

"Did you beam down to the planet alone?" Sulu asked.

"You expect me to tell you the size of my landing party?" Solga asked. "I am no fool. The best thing for you to do would be retreat before my team arrives."

"I doubt that." Sulu smiled. "Your ship knows I am here. If there were others in the immediate area, the ship would have informed them and they'd be here now."

"Are you suggesting you are alone on the planet?" Solga asked.

"Of course not." Sulu smiled. "We're just a little spread out. They'll be here any minute. What would the Tal Shiar say to you being captured twice? By the same ship?"

"I am not captured yet, Sulu." She nodded at the disruptor in her hand. "What kind of a standoff did you call it?"

"Mexican." Sulu smiled. "I would think the meaning is obvious."

"Yes." Solga nodded.

Commander Sulu studied the Romulan and thought over his options. They both knew the others in their respective teams were checking out other possible sights of the receiver. They both knew this device might be a decoy. "I have a suggestion, Solga."

"I am listening, Sulu."

"Why don't we both put our weapons away and try to determine if this is the real receiver?" Sulu said. "There is no point in getting killed or captured over a fake."

"You want me to put my weapon down?" Solga asked. "Do you think I am stupid?"

"Both of us." Sulu said. "Just long enough to see what we are dealing with here. And any information we retrieve, we share."

"What makes you think I would trust you?" Solga asked.

"I don't exactly trust you either." Sulu said. "But our only other choice is to stand here until reinforcements arrive. Why don't we just do our jobs and let the brass worry about the fall out."

"Brass?" Solga asked. "Fall out?"

"Command." Sulu translated the slang terms to something the universal translator could accurately put into the Romulan language. "And repercussions."

Subcommander Solga studied Sulu carefully. She had been taught since she was a girl not to trust Humans. But as far as she could tell, Sulu had been honest with her. But she had no way of knowing what he had said to his Admiral regarding their conversations. Finally she said, "You put your weapon down first."

"At the same time." Sulu smiled. The negotiations reminded him of less serious standoffs with his sisters when they were kids. Solga nodded her agreement to the terms. Their eyes met and they lowered their arms slowly. The two enemy soldiers stood facing each other for a minute looking for signs of betrayal. Finally Sulu said. "If this device is anything like the others we came across on this planet, there is more to it than meets the eye."

Solga turned to the device and opened a hand held scanning device. "It looks like an ordinary cargo box, but there is communication and imaging equipment inside. Any idea how to access it?"

Sulu set his tricorder to record everything, then reached out and touched the top of the cargo box. The lid slid open to reveal a control panel. "Exactly like the last box we found on this planet." Sulu said.

"There was another?" Solga asked.

"Yes." Sulu studied the controls. "I only saw it on the planet. Our First Officer took charge of the analysis once it was on board."

"So you don't know any more about it?" Solga asked.

"Only what he reported at the staff meeting." Sulu said. "Computer."

"Working." The computer replied.

"Display all transmissions received." Sulu said.

"Display?" Solga asked looking for a screen. There wasn't one on the top with the controls.

"Access code required." The computer said.

"Natalya." Sulu said.

"Access denied." The computer said.

"Natalya was the access code for the other device?" Solga asked. Sulu nodded. "What does it mean?"

"It is a woman's name." Sulu said. To the computer he said. "Access code Tegra."

"Access denied."

"Access code Krush." Solga said.

"Access denied."

"What's Krush?" Sulu asked.

"The name of the pirate's ship." Solga said. "Didn't you know?"

"No." Sulu sighed. He tried to think of another code. "Access code Bartell."

"Access denied."

"What else did the pirate say?" Solga asked.

Sulu sat down in front of the box and thought. "I wasn't present at the interrogations. And my understanding is that Bartell was at first too drunk to talk. Then too hungover to say much."

"But?"

"But I do have my sources." Sulu smiled at her. "And Mr. Chekov was researching some names for Mr. Spock coming from that interrogation. Access code Heren-tre."

"That is a Della Mir name." Solga said. She looked first at Sulu then back at the cargo box when the front of the box slid open to reveal a computer screen.

"I know." Sulu said to Solga. To the computer he repeated the original command. "Display all transmissions received. Access code Heren-tre."

The screen displayed the information on five separate transmissions. Both officers studied the information intensely. Solga sat on the ground next to Sulu.

"I don't understand." Solga said.

"What?"

After she wiped the purple dust off her hands, Solga pointed to the log of the times the transmissions came in. "Where is the transmission we detected just before crossing the Neutral Zone?"

Sulu turned to Solga and smiled. "I thought nothing happened to make the Heekrt cross into Federation Space and come to this system."

"It was classified." Solga shrugged.

"Of course." Sulu nodded. "Did you ascertain a point of origin for that transmission?"

"It was too short." Solga said. "Sent on a compressed beam. But it came from Romulan Space."

"Computer." Sulu said. "Play last transmission received."

A Mirta man in full uniform appeared on the screen. "Drellam. We await your transmission. The Krush has missed its last two progress reports. If there is a problem, please signal. If I do not hear from you soon, I will be forced to fill our needs from other sources. Heren-tre out."

"The Della Mir wanted to buy this technology?" Solga turned away from the screen to ask Sulu. "The cloaked mines?"

"So it would seem."

"Computer." Solga said. "Display all transmissions received. Access code Drellam."

"There it is." Sulu pointed to the information on screen. "That would be the time frame when I had landed the shuttle on this planet." Sulu said. "No wonder Bartell was so anxious to get us off the planet. He thought we would detect the transmission."

"You did not?"

"All I had on board was a doctor and a couple of med techs." Sulu said. "They never would have noticed a compressed transmission. And I was busy with other problems."

"Computer." Solga said. "Play final transmission."

A humaniod woman appeared on the screen. On her head was draped a soft shimmering fabric that reflected the light around her. Her skin was a pale beige making her bright apple green eyes stand out dramatically. "Heren-tre. We have lost contact with the Krush. Up until this point the tests have gone well. Edward Bartell has impressed upon the council the need to deal with the Mirta exclusively. However there are other voices to be heard. Look for my transmission regarding a face to face meeting at the next appointed time. Drellam out."

"Other voices?" Sulu said. "I wonder what she means."

"Your government?" Solga suggested.

"Or perhaps yours." Sulu shrugged. He pulled out his communicator. "Sulu to Enterprise."

"Standby Sulu." Uhura said.

"Something is going on." Sulu said.

"A battle?" Solga asked but did not wait for an answer. She got up and walked away from Sulu while contacting her own ship.

Sulu also stood up. But he stayed next to the transmitter and kept an eye on Solga. Mr. Spock had made a detailed report regarding the pirate's technology making it possible for Sulu to quickly deactivate the invisibility screen. Then he took his phaser out and made sure it was active and ready. "Kirk here."

"Admiral." Sulu said "I have the transmitter. I am ready to beam up."

"I can't drop shields now, Sulu." Kirk said. "You have a Romulan in your immediate area with five more on their way towards you. Is there anywhere you can take cover until we can pick you up?"

"Possibly, Admiral." Sulu said. "The Romulan officer is Solga. We have cooperated to access the transmissions stored in this device. I have viewed two of the transmissions. One from Heren-tre and the other from a humaniod woman called Drellam."

"Drellam?" Kirk said quickly. "Do the Romulans know where the transmission came from?"

"No Sir. At least Subcommander Solga does not." Sulu reported. "But if they have complete access to this device, they will."

"Sulu. This is priority one." Kirk said. "The Romulans are not to take possession of that device. At any cost."

"Understood, Admiral." Sulu said. "Sulu out."

Solga was still talking to her ship. Sulu used his tricorder to download the rest of the transmissions from the cargo box transmitter/receiver. He was just finishing when Solga started walking back towards him. She leveled her disruptor at Sulu. "Step away from the transmitter, Commander Sulu."

Sulu had his phaser pointed at her already. He smiled. "Isn't this how we started, Subcommander Solga?"

"It is." Solga returned his smile briefly. "But things are different now. Those

reinforcements we spoke of are mine and they will be here momentarily."

"So I have been informed." Sulu backed up as he spoke. "I'll have to be going."

"No need to leave." Solga watched him for any sign that he might fire his phaser. She thought for sure she would see it in his eyes. "You can be a guest of my government for a change."

"I don't think I'd like that." Sulu continued to back away from her. Without further warning, he fired his phaser. The beam of light struck her in the chest and she crumpled to the ground, stunned. Sulu changed the setting on his phaser and turned it on the transmitter. Smoke and sparks poured from the mechanism as Sulu fired. After a few seconds the whole device exploded with a force that pushed Sulu back. He quickly scanned for the approaching Romulans and ran off as far away from them as possible.

Sulu ran at a steady pace for ten minutes. When he slowed down, he scanned behind him for Romulans. No one was following him. At least not yet. He checked his oxygen pack. It was low. After adjusting the mask's flow to conserve oxygen, Sulu headed at a considerably slower pace to an outcropping of rocks. When he got there, he sat down in the little bit of shade the rocks offers.

"They will be running out of oxygen soon." McCoy said.

"I know, Bones." Kirk paced around the bridge as he thought. "However, we must assume the cruiser is maintaining weapons lock. As soon as we drop shields they will decloak and fire."

"If you don't beam them up, they'll die." McCoy said. "How long can it take?"

"Approximately thirty seconds." Spock said.

"Too long." Kirk shook his head and continued to pace.

"Admiral." Uhura interrupted. "Sulu is signaling again."

Kirk grabbed the command chair and swung it around to access the controls that would let him speak to Sulu. "Kirk here."

"Admiral. I have downloaded the files from the transmitter." Sulu spoke slowly taking time to breathe as best he could. "And destroyed the mechanism."

"How's your oxygen, Sulu?" Kirk asked.

"Low." Sulu said. "I have adjusted the flow to stretch my time. I estimate fifteen minutes."

"Understood." Kirk said. "Conserve your energy. You'll be home soon."

"Aye."

"Kirk out." The Admiral sat heavily in the command chair. Spock and McCoy watched and waited. He impatiently punched the comline control. "Kirk to Scott."

"Scott here."

"Scotty, we need to bring the landing party up." Kirk said. "As quickly as possible."

"Transfer shield control to the transporter room, Admiral." Scott said. "I can have them on board and shields back up in thirty seconds."

"I need you to cut that time in half, Scotty." Kirk said.

"By half? Impossible. One third, maybe. But, Admiral, the only way I could do that..."

Scotty hesitated. "Well, it is very risky."

"What is it, Scotty?" Kirk asked quickly.

"There are no guarantees."

"Understood." Kirk said. "Tell me."

"With Mr. Spock's help, we could override the system's safety protocols." Scotty said.

"Then we could raise shields before the rematerializing sequence is completed."

"Scotty." Kirk asked even though he already knew the answer. "If there is a problem? A power fluctuation? A disrupter hit on any related systems?"

"The patterns would be lost." Scotty said. "I'd have no where to go with them."

"Spock." Kirk looked up at his first officer. "Assist Mr. Scott. Advise me when you are ready."

Spock nodded and left the bridge. He wasn't gone for three minutes when Mr. Lebowitz reported. "Battle cruiser decloaking."

"Red alert." Kirk said automatically. "Hail her, Uhura."

"She powering forward disruptors." Lt. Destino reported from the science station.

"I get no response, Admiral." Uhura said. "Transporter room reports ready."

"She's coming around to bearing 025 mark 6." Lebowitz reported. "All weapons systems show ready."

"Stand by your phasers, Mr. Lebowitz. Target weapons. On my mark." Kirk leaned forward in his chair as they watched the cruiser coming closer. "Fire!"

The phaser beams shot out from the Enterprise making contact with the Ramakam's shields. Ensign Lebowitz hit the same spot three times as the Ramakam passed over the Enterprise. The Romulans returned fire as they passed.

"Damage report." Kirk demanded.

"Shields holding." Kellerman reported from the navigation station.

"Admiral." Lt. Destino called from the science station. Kirk turned his chair towards the dark haired man. "The Romulans have dropped shields."

"Aft phasers." Kirk said to Lebowitz.

"Aft phasers locked on target." Lebowitz said.

"She's activated transporters." Destino reported.

Kirk stood up and leaned forward to put his hand on Lebowitz's shoulder. "Belay that phasers order."

Startled by the Admiral's sudden action, Lebowitz quickly released the targeting computer and consulted his readings again. He looked up at Kirk and reported. "We had her, Admiral. But the Ramakam has cloaked again."

Admiral Kirk just nodded and straightened up. After he returned to his chair and took a couple of deep breaths, Kirk said. "Stand down red alert."

"You think he's done?" McCoy asked.

The Admiral shrugged and turned his chair towards the science station. "Any Romulans left on the planet, Destino?"

The lieutenant checked his sensors. "None, Sir. Only our people."

"I believe what we just saw was Commander Judar's idea of a diversion, Bones." Kirk turned to the Doctor. "Now that he has his crew, he shouldn't bother with us any longer."

"You're sure about that?" McCoy asked.

Kirk ignored McCoy's question and opened the comline to the transporter room. "Spock. The Ramakam has beamed up its crew and recloak. But I doubt that Judar has left the area."

"Agreed." Spock said. "We are ready to proceed as discussed."

"Good." Kirk said. "Mr. Lebowitz transfer shield control to the transporter room."

"Aye Sir." Lebowitz said. "Control transferred to transporter."

"Spock." McCoy said. "Transport the landing party directly to sick bay. They are getting dangerously low on oxygen."

"Negative, Doctor." Spock said. "It is not possible with the manual over ride."

"Then I'm on my way." McCoy said as he left the bridge.

"Spock keep the comline open. Just in case." Kirk ordered. "Proceed."

"Computer over ride transporter safety protocol Gamma Zero Six. Authorization Spock Theta Omega." Spock said as his long fingers moved expertly over the bypass control board next to the regular transporter controls.

"Manual over ride accepted." The computer said. "Audio progression required."

"Energize, Mr. Scott."

"Energizing." Scotty said as Dr. McCoy came into the transporter room. Seconds after McCoy, med tech Lt. Afrah came in with a medical kit.

"Dematerialization process at 10%." The computer informed Spock. Scotty took the transporter controls through the regular pattern. The computer reported at three second intervals. "Dematerialization process at 48%. Dematerialization process at 83%. Dematerialization process at 100%."

Scotty watched the energy beam shimmer and glow as the patterns started to form on the transporter pads. McCoy's and Scott's eyes met when they heard the bridge helm officer report. "Battle cruiser decloaking. Bearing 093 mark 45."

"Energy shift to destination." The computer said. "Rematerialization process at 12%."

"Her disruptors are locked on us." Destino reported on the bridge. "We need to raise shields now, Sir."

"Scotty?" Kirk watched the battle cruiser just sitting in space above him with its weapons powered and locked on target.

"Another second, Admiral." Scotty called. He looked up at Spock who was watching the indicators carefully.

The two seconds seemed like an eternity before Spock ordered the computer. "Raise shields."

"Shields engaged." The computer responded. "Rematerialization process at 78%." The patterns started to look vaguely like five people. "Rematerialization process at 100%."

"She's cloaking." Ensign Lebowitz voice was barely audible. "I don't understand."

The landing party had all been sitting down when the unannounced transport had taken place. Each member ripped off the oxygen mask and took deep breaths of the oxygen rich Enterprise atmosphere. McCoy and Afrah rushed up onto the pad administering triox compounds by hypo.

"Admiral." Spock reported. "The landing party is safely on board."

"Good work Spock, Scotty." Kirk said. "Their condition, Bones?"

"They'll live." McCoy said. He put his hand on Chekov's shoulder and pushed him down when Chekov tried to get up. "But I want to check them out in sick bay just to be sure."

Before the group left for sick bay, the landing party turned in their equipment. Sulu made sure he gave his tricorder with the down loaded files directly to Mr. Spock.