

Dr. McCoy examined and released Commander Sulu first because Admiral Kirk wanted him in briefing room two. When he arrived, Kirk and Spock were viewing one of the transmissions that Sulu had downloaded on the planet.

"Sulu." Kirk said. "Sit down. Are you sure the Romulans had not downloaded any of these files before you arrived?"

"Solga had not determined how to access the files." Sulu explained. "She may have recorded our contact on her tricorder as I did. But that's all."

"Your record of the incident starts after you and Subcommander Solga decided to cooperate." Spock said. "How did you arrive at that agreement?"

"I thought she hadn't scanned me." Sulu said. "But when I approached her, Solga was not surprised at all. I had my phaser on her. She had her disruptor on me. Solga attempted to return to her ship, but was told to hold position."

"So you had a stand off." Kirk said.

"Yes Sir." Sulu nodded. "We had a discussion as to who the receiver belonged to, but neither of us was willing to concede ownership to the other. I suggested that we ascertain if it was the real thing before deciding if it was worth capture or death."

"And she went for it?" Kirk asked.

"It was either that or stand there and do nothing until circumstances changed."

"Sulu," Kirk looked him directly in the eye. "Did you at any time mention the Tegra to Solga?"

"Yes Sir." Sulu nodded, "I told her the pirates had said the Tegra developed the invisibility screen technology."

"Damn." Kirk said softly. "And what did Solga say?"

"She laughed." Sulu said. "Then she told me that the Tegra were a Romulan myth. That they did not exist."

"Did you believe her?"

"Yes Sir." Sulu answered emphatically. "She seemed genuinely amused that I believed what she considered to be the pirate's lie."

"Did Solga know that Drellam is a member of the Tegra?" Spock asked.

"I don't think so, Mr. Spock." Sulu said. "Although I am sure Solga will report everything she saw or heard."

"All right, Sulu." Kirk said. "That's all."

"Admiral," Sulu asked before he got up to go. "Does this concern over what the Romulans know about the Tegra come from ..."

"Yes." Kirk cut Sulu off in mid sentence. "Unfortunately, I can't tell you any more."

"Yes Sir." Sulu got up to leave.

"And Sulu." Kirk stopped him at the door. "Ensign Lebowitz handled himself well in his first battle."

"I'm sure he'll appreciate the good word, Admiral." Sulu nodded and left the briefing room.

Commander Sulu walked into the rec room a few minutes early for his weekly poker

game. Ensign Lebowitz sat on one of the couches in the room bent over a computer padd. Having spent the first eight months after graduation assigned to headquarters, David Lebowitz had been on Enterprise only a few months

"Evening, Ensign." Sulu smiled. "Mind if I sit down?"

"Of course not, Sir." Lebowitz sputters and unconsciously straighten up in his seat.

Sulu sat down and leaned back against the couch hoping the young man would also relax.

"So, how was your first battle, Mr. Lebowitz?"

"Confusing, Commander." Lebowitz did relax a bit. After having worked for a very straight by the book officer at headquarters, Commander Sulu's easy manner was a welcome change. He had been shocked and unprepared the first time Sulu had asked his opinion, but he was slowly getting use to Sulu's informal discussions.

"The bridge does get to be a pretty hectic place during a battle." Sulu nodded. "But Admiral Kirk tells me you did fine."

"He did?" Lebowitz asked with a surprised smile. Sulu nodded. "The thing that confused me most was Admiral Kirk's change of mind about firing on the cruiser."

"What do you mean?"

"First we fired. Their shields held. They fired. Our shields held." Lebowitz explained. "Then when they lowered shields, the Admiral ordered me to lock phasers. They activated transporters and the Admiral ordered me to take phasers off target lock."

"Sounds like he wanted to give the Ramakam a chance to retrieve her personnel." Sulu said. "After all he knew they did not have the information. I did."

"But why take the phasers off target lock?" Lebowitz asked. "Wouldn't it have been better to maintain phaser lock in case the Romulans tried anything? What if they tried to beam up our landing party?"

"I see your point." Sulu nodded. "Perhaps I would have had I been in command. But the Admiral does things in his own way. And it's been my experience that his way is usually effective."

"Yes Sir." Lebowitz nodded. "But when Mr. Spock and Mr. Scott were beaming up the landing party, the Romulan decloaked and held her weapons on us. As soon as we raised shields, she cloaked. It was almost like they were trying to show us they could return the favor."

"Sounds like that is exactly what they were trying to do." Sulu said. "Your evaluation is on target."

"Hikaru." Uhura called from the poker table. "Are you playing?"

Sulu looked up. He hadn't noticed the rest of the poker players come in and take their seats at the table across the room. Chekov, Chapel, and Uhura were already passing out the poker chips. Even Scotty walked in on time. As he got up to join them, Sulu said as quick. "See you later, Lebowitz."

"About time." Chapel was already shuffling the cards when Sulu sat down.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Doctor." Sulu smiled. Christine Chapel stuck her tongue out at him. "But I am his supervisor. And it was his first battle."

"He did fine." Uhura waved away Sulu's concerns. She turned to the chief engineer.

"Nice of you to join us, Scotty."

Scotty shook his head and stacked his chips. "I haven't missed the game in six weeks,

Lass. Isn't it about time you let it go?"

"We'll see next week." Uhura said. "You've never made it seven weeks in a row."

"I think we'll start with five card draw." Dr. Chapel announced as she started to deal.

"Are we actually on our way back to Base 39? Again?"

"Uh huh." Sulu answered. "We have to turn the transmission files over to Ambassador Muldaur."

"Were there any Tegra transmissions?" Chekov asked.

"There was a humanoid woman named Drellam." Sulu said. "According to Mr. Spock, she was Tegra. According to the Romulans, the Tegra are a myth."

"Myth?" Uhura asked. "Pavel, did you find anything about them? Mr. Spock must have had you in every database you could possibly access."

"There was a mention of them in the Bolian database." Chekov said. "They say the Tegra are a magical people who can appear and disappear at will. If you catch one he will grant a wish, but the wishes often turn out badly."

"Sounds like leprachauns." Chapel smiled at the thought.

"The Little People." Scotty laughed. "Ireland's tricksters."

"My mother often referred to Loki the giant during especially violent thunder storms." Chekov said. "He was also a trickster. Although more evil than mischievous."

"Loki?" Uhura asked. "That's not a Russian myth."

"Of course it is." Chekov shrugged.

"No. That's a viking myth!" Uhura said. "Odin and that crowd."

"Are we talking or playing?" Chapel asked. "Cards?"

"Two." Chekov threw two cards in Dr. Chapel's general direction. As he picked up the two cards Chapel dealt, he added. "Didn't you know? The Vikings were Russian."

His statement resulted in a boisterous uproar from Chekov's friends.

"Three." Uhura requested when they had stopped laughing. "If you want to talk tricksters, my grandfather routinely scared little children with tales of Ansi the spider."

"I'll play these." Sulu said.

"What no Japanese myths?" Chapel asked.

"Unlike the rest of you peasants," Sulu kept a perfectly straight face. "I was raised in a large multicultural city. I could quote you myths that originate all over our globe, Japan included."

"Excuse us!"

"Moscow is hardly a tiny village."

"And what is wrong with a tiny village?"

"I'll take one card." Scotty said. "And leave the banshees out of it."

When Enterprise came into orbit around Starbase 39-Sierra, no liberty was issued. It was obvious to the entire crew they would not be staying long. Less than an hour had passed when Admiral Kirk returned to the bridge from his meeting with Ambassador Muldaur and Admiral Coster. The senior staff had come on duty while Kirk was on the base. Mr. Spock relinquished the command chair to Kirk.

"Well?" McCoy asked.

"The Ambassador has all the information." Kirk said.

"That's it?" McCoy demanded.

"I'm sorry, Bones. The rest is top secret." Kirk said. "But the Ambassador did express gratitude for a job well done."

"Nice of him." McCoy mumbled.

"Commander Uhura." Kirk turned his chair towards the communications station. "Where would we have to be to intercept one of those compressed transmissions the Della Mir and Tegra have been sending to G-582?"

"Either on the planet itself." Uhura said. "Or if you knew which one was going to be transmitting, on a direct line from that planet to the transmitter."

"Spock." Kirk turned to the science station. "The files that Sulu downloaded from the transmitter. Were they sent at regular intervals?"

"Yes." Spock nodded. "The transmissions from the Tegra were every seventy six hours and thirty six minutes. From the Mirta commander, every ninety three hours."

"Do you have enough information to determine the location of the transmissions sights?" Kirk asked.

"Perhaps." Spock thought about the problem for a minute. "The timing of the Tegra transmission suggest they may be waiting for the orbits of the planets to line up."

"I know where the Tegra are." Kirk said. "And they are, unfortunately, off limits. What about the Mirta?"

"Logically that transmission is coming from a Mirta ship." Spock said. "Della Mir Space is too far for compressed beam transmissions. Pinpointing the exact location will be difficult."

"They don't have a cloaking device yet." McCoy observed.

"Give me an approximate location, Spock." Kirk said. "We'll ask all traffic in that area if they have seen them. We'll go look."

"And the purpose of this exercise, Admiral?" Spock asked.

"To let the Della Mir know that we know what they've been up to." Kirk said.

Spock turned back to his computer and started his analysis. It was only a few moments later when Spock said. "The Hanolin asteroid belt."

"Good hiding place." Kirk nodded. "Mr Chekov set course for the Hanolin system."

"Aye Sir."

"Warp six."

"Warp six." Sulu said. "Aye."

"ETA thirty eight hours." Chekov added.

When he was off duty, Sulu requested a real time connection to Earth. It was only a few minutes before Jimmi appeared on his screen. He couldn't help but smile at her. "Hello Beautiful. Are you all dressed up for me?"

"For your call?" Jimmi laughed. "Check you ego, Mister. It's Saturday night and I am at work."

"Days of the week tend to lose their meaning on a starship." Hikaru shrugged. Then he

smiled and ordered. "Let me see."

Jimmi adjusted the screen to a wide view and stood up. She twirled around to give him the full view of her short backless party dress. The silk skirt flared slightly as she twirled. "What do you think?"

"I like it." He laughed. "Wear that when I see you in July."

"No way." She laughed and sat back down to readjust the screen for a close up view. "I have a much better dress in mind for the night you show up."

"I can't wait."

"It won't be long." Jimmi leaned on the desk. She treasured every second of the meaningless every day conversation. Regardless of the topic, his deep voice always took on a soft loving tone when they were alone. Jimmi couldn't help but respond to it. "Everything is going according to schedule. I'll be moving soon."

"Won't you miss Earth?" Hikaru asked.

"Don't you?" Jimmi countered with a smile. "I'll miss some things. Some friends. But you know me. Always look ahead. Never back."

"Pavel said you were nervous."

"It's a good kind of nervous." Jimmi tossed her curls and shrugged it off. "And just where did he get that idea? I never told Pavel I was nervous."

"I don't know." He said. Nor did he care. It just felt good to talk to her.

"So what is happening on Enterprise?" Jimmi asked.

"The usual." Hikaru shrugged.

"So why couldn't I get through when I called?"

"I don't know." Hikaru said. "The Admiral has been to some high level meetings and the explanations have been scarce."

"I thought he told you everything." Jimmi teased.

"Hardly." Hikaru laughed. The signal on Sulu's console lit to tell him his time was up. "It's about that time."

"Damn it." Jimmi frowned. "I wish they'd give us more time to talk. These real time connections go too fast."

"Sorry Baby." Hikaru sighed. She was right. It always was hard to say goodbye. "You know if it was up to me, I'd talk to you all night. But..."

"Regulations." Jimmi sighed and smiled at him. "I know. Oh well, I have to get back to work anyway. I love you, Hikaru."

"I love you too, Jeanie."

"You'll be careful?"

"Always." He smiled. "I'll see you soon."

"Bye Harry."

Dr. McCoy met Admiral Kirk for breakfast. The Enterprise was still a couple hours away from the Hanolin system. The doctor waited until they were done with their breakfast. He sipped his coffee and watched his friend.

"So Jim." McCoy finally asked. "Are you going to tell me?"

"No deep dark secret, Bones." Kirk smiled. "We are doing exactly what I said we are

doing."

"Right." McCoy nodded. "And it has nothing to do with your reaction to Ambassador Muldaur."

"My reactions? Bones, you were never even in the same room with Muldaur." Kirk sipped his coffee.

"Your point?" McCoy raised his eyebrow at Kirk. "After all these years, I don't need a tricorder to tell when your blood pressure is going through the roof."

"I will admit to not enjoying the Ambassador's statement regarding Starfleet blundering." Kirk said. "I will even admit annoyance at his condescending attitude towards me and my crew's abilities. But it's part of the job."

"Uh huh."

"I just want the Della Mir to know we are watching." Kirk said. "And I have cleared it with command. Any more questions, Doctor?"

"None that I can think of." McCoy shrugged.

"Good." Kirk got up. "I'm due on the bridge."

Before Kirk had even finished his statement, Uhura was calling him on the comline. "Bridge to Admiral Kirk."

"Kirk here."

"Admiral, Ambassador Lightfoot wishes to speak to you." Uhura said. Dr. McCoy raised his eyebrow at Kirk.

"Put it through to my quarters, Uhura." Kirk said. "Have Mr. Spock meet me there."

"Aye Sir." Commander Uhura answered.

"Come on, Bones." Kirk laughed at McCoy's silent commentary.

"Are you sure this conversation won't get too personal?" McCoy followed Kirk into the turbo lift.

"Deck five." Kirk ordered the turbo lift on its way. "If it does, Bones, I will have to rely on your discretion."

When Spock joined McCoy and Kirk, the Admiral had just said hello to Ambassador Carly Lightfoot. Kirk waved Spock into the room. Carly's short coal black hair was swept back off her face to accent her beautiful large black eyes. As always she was dressed in the height of Earth's functional fashion highlighted with bright bold jewelry from her native Brazil.

"What did you find out, Carly?" Kirk asked.

"First things first, Jim." Lightfoot said. "You did not hear this from me. We have never had this conversation."

"I understand, Carly."

"Rilyn Heren-tre's ship has been recalled to Mirtal-shey which is his command post." Carly said. "According to my sources, Rilyn had tacit permission from command to explore the possibility of obtaining a cloaking device. Their diplomatic people deny any knowledge of such a mission. They say that Rilyn is merely exploring Federation space for sources of kilarium which they use in a manufacturing process and that his mission is to establish trade relations."

"The Hanolin asteroid belt is rich in kilarium." Spock observed.

"Convenient." McCoy said.

"The point is, he's been recalled." Lightfoot said. "He was given an extremely secret and

delicate assignment and he failed. Rilyn Heren-tre will not be given any choice assignments again. I would not be surprised to see him assigned to border patrol."

"But that does not mean the Della Mir are no longer interested in cloaking technology." Kirk said.

"You are right, Jim." Lightfoot nodded. "They want it. They will find a way to get it. And they will do everything they can to keep us from knowing about it until it is done."

"We are not far from the asteroid belt we believe has been using as a hiding place." Kirk said. "I am inclined to confront him. What do you think?"

Carly Lightfoot smiled. "Do you think you could find a reason to escort him from Federation Space?"

"Possibly." Kirk returned her smile. "It would certainly send a strong message to his superiors."

"Yes it would." She said. "Now, Admiral, as to the price of this information..."

"Just a minute." Kirk turned away from the screen and nodded towards the door. Spock and McCoy got the message. As they were leaving, Kirk smiled at Lightfoot and said. "I am all yours."

"Good." She laughed. "Because I have plans for you, Jim."