

Enterprise left Starbase Twelve and went back to work. In Admiral Kirk's opinion they had engaged in enough shore leave to last the crew six months. Ensign Gonzoles continued flying the shuttles. Her schedule had her spending one night on the base then the next on Earth. Rosita's conversation with Admiral Kirk had given her renewed hope. She put in her request for a transfer to Excelsior as the Admiral had suggested.

Jimmi didn't have a chance to talk to Ensign Rosita Gonzoles again until three other starships had picked up their new officers. L.J. had been monopolizing the ensign's time on the base. Gonzoles was sitting at the end of the bar enjoying her dinner. Jimmi brought her a new Trillian Ale.

"Thanks Boss." Rosita smiled. She had been in the Café seven out of the last thirteen nights. It was starting to feel like a home away from home.

"This one's on me." Jimmi said.

"Thank you." Rosita said. "But what's the occasion?"

"Commander Chekov tells me you saved Harry's life." Jimmi said. "The least I can do is buy you a beer."

"When you said you were waiting for Harry, I never even considered that you meant Commander Sulu." Rosita said.

"It's kind of a pet name." Jimmi laughed.

"That's what I assumed."

"I've got to be more careful. Hikaru really doesn't really like it and he definitely doesn't like me using it to anyone but him." Jimmi grinned while she poured herself an Altair water. "But since you saved his life, I guess it's ok."

"I guess I should be honored." Rosita laughed. "As for saving his life, I think that is over stating the facts a bit. It was really the other way around."

"Oh?" Jimmi asked.

"My runabout had gone down and Enterprise was searching for survivors." Gonzoles explained as she finished up her meal. "Mr. Sulu was leading the team that found us. It was a dangerous planet. We found ourselves in the middle of a war. But he got us all back safely."

"Well, that's more than he would ever tell me." Jimmi sipped her drink. "When did all this happen?"

"It was just after I reported to Starbase 68. About four years ago." Gonzoles said. She hesitated. "Mr. Sulu doesn't tell you about these kinds of things?"

"I hear words like classified and business from him." Jimmi put her glass down and started refilling the small bowls that sat on the bar with nuts, pretzels and other salty snacks as she talked with Gonzoles. "But then we do have other things to talk about."

"Interesting." Gonzoles said sipping her beer. "So this not talking is helpful in maintaining a relationship?"

"It works for him." Jimmi laughed "It drives me crazy."

"Interesting." Gonzoles said again. She made a mental note to ask Mr. Sulu how this worked from his point of view. Maybe it would help if she ever found another relationship of her own. Although right now she doubted that she would ever get involved again. At least not seriously.

"Hey Rosita." Lenny came up behind her resting his hand lightly on her back. "How about a dance?"

"That sounds nice, L.J." Rosita turned to smile at him. Jimmi took the empty plate back to the kitchen.

As they danced among the last of the ensigns, Lenny smiled. He found himself wishing she could stay longer. "So, this is your last night?"

"Yes." Rosita returned his smile. He was tall, good looking, and a lot of fun. And he understood that she didn't want any serious entanglements right now. In Rosita's eyes, the perfect man. "Time to get back to the real world."

"If it's that bad, why don't you just resign." Lenny suggested.

"I'm sorry L.J. All you've heard me do is complain." Rosita apologized.

"That's not all." He said holding her just a little closer.

"I don't want to leave Starfleet. I just thought I would have made lieutenant by now." She explained. "After Mr. Sulu said I had a future in the service, I guess I just expected more."

"Sulu?" Lenny asked. His smile faded a bit.

"Yes. He's been most encouraging. And I have found his insight very helpful over the years." Rosita said. Surprised by the concerned look on his face, she asked. "Why? Is this a problem?"

"No." Lenny shook his head slowly. He would not let this bother him. "But can we talk about something other than Commander Sulu?"

"Of course." She smiled. She should know better than to dance with one man while talking about another. "You could tell me what a good dancer I am."

"You are a wonderful dancer, Ms. Gonzoles." Lenny's smile returned. "My mother would be appalled at my manners for not having said so before."

"Mr. Vasco," Rosita laughed. "Do you still worry about what your mother would think? At your age?"

"Maybe I shouldn't." Lenny said. "But Mom has always been adamant that her son be a gentleman. And that has stood in my way, on occasion. On the relationship front, I mean."

"It hasn't stood in your way with me." Rosita smiled. The music was ending. As they walked back towards the bar, she continued. "If I may be so bold as to advise you, don't leave your homeworld manners behind. They are endearing."

"I'll keep that in mind, Rosey." Lenny kissed her quickly. "But now, I have to get back to work."

Commander Sulu and Lt. Commander Chekov walked into briefing room five. It was large enough to seat twenty but only six ensigns waited for the two senior officers. As ordered, each ensign had changed out of his duty uniform to the black and grey coveralls used for especially dirty details. The six young men were not enthusiastic, but stood and came to attention as they had after their dinner break every night for the last two weeks.

"Good evening, Gentlemen." Sulu said. "Tonight's detail is level three maintenance procedure on the deuterium fuel pumps and fill ports."

"Level three?" Ensign Coleman asked. The last thing Rick Coleman wanted to do was dismantle, clean, and reassemble fuel pumps all night.

"Is there a problem, Mr. Coleman?" Chekov asked.

"No Sir." Coleman said.

"Then let's get to it." Chekov said. "We've all put in a full shift already. I for one would like to see my bunk before the end of second shift."

The six ensigns followed Sulu and Chekov out of the briefing room. By the time they reached the fuel pumps, Lt. Pequot had already taken pump two off line. It was big enough that when they took it apart two men could stand up inside it easily. Without much discussion, the team went to work. Coleman and Yamato climbed into the pit that housed the huge pump followed by Silverberg and Khanna. Deitz and Cubano inspected the fill ports on either side of the pit.

"Jun." Coleman said. "Hand me the antigrav."

"Here Rick." Yamato leaned over the pump that Coleman was sitting in.

"Thanks." Coleman had to twist around to get the antigrav attached to the heavy panel he was trying to move. While he struggled with it he asked his friend quietly.

"How long is this going to last?"

"Until Admiral Kirk gets bored, I guess." Yamato whispered back. He grabbed the top handle on the antigrav and pulled. "But I'll tell you one thing, it will be a long time before I spend that much time in a bar again."

"I believe that is the point the Admiral is trying to get across." Commander Sulu said from the deck just above and behind Ensign Yamato.

"Yes Sir." Yamato said.

Commander Scott came into the work area carrying a tool case and tricorder. He strolled up to Sulu and Chekov who leaned on the railing that surrounded the pit.

"Evening, lads." Scotty smiled. "Having fun?"

"No." Chekov and Sulu answered together. Scotty laughed.

"Did you just come to gloat, Scotty?" Chekov asked. "Or has something interesting happened that requires our presence on the bridge?"

"If you lads thought more about work and less about the lasses..." Scotty chuckled.

"Gloating." Sulu said to Chekov.

"No." Scotty objected. "Actually, I have been getting some odd readings from this pump. While your team has it apart, I'd like to do a molecular scan."

"Want kind of readings?" Sulu asked.

"Minute amounts of contaminants. It is combining with the deuterium, so I am not sure what it is." Scotty handed him the tricorder. Chekov looked over Sulu's shoulder as he ran the report. "The deuterium is still pure enough for our purposes. But if a problem is developing, better to take care of it right away."

Sulu took the tricorder and climbed down the four rung ladder. He leaned into the pump. Both Yamato and Coleman were inside now. He handed the tricorder to Yamato

who was the closer of the two ensigns. "I need a molecular scan of the entire interior of this pump."

"Yes Sir." Yamato said. "We're looking for metal fatigue?"

"That's a start." Sulu said. "Also any deterioration or signs of stress."

"Yes Sir." Yamato nodded and started scanning.

When Sulu returned to Chekov and Scotty, Chekov was explaining. "I was not in the Café until closing. I left shortly after you."

"I saw the lass, Chekov." Scotty winked at Chekov. "You may not have been at the bar, but I'll bet you weren't in your own bunk either."

"Ensign Yamato is doing the scan." Sulu said. "I'll let you know the results."

"All right." Scotty laughed and started to walk away. "I'll get out of your hair. I can see you have work to do."

After Scotty had left them, Chekov said, "First you, then Uhura, now Scotty. When is Mr. Spock going to ask me about my date?"

Sulu laughed out loud. "Now you know how I feel."

Time was passing slowly. There wasn't much Sulu and Chekov could do but stand over the ensigns and watch. After two weeks of extra duty the ensigns who had failed to report were becoming a close knit group. They had performed maintenance on almost every major system on the ship.

"Mr. Sulu." Ensign Yamato called as he came out of the fuel pump half an hour after Sulu had handed over the tricorder. "I've found something."

"What?" Sulu asked.

Yamato came up the ladder to the deck. "The scan of the turbines show a barely readable shortage of lanthanum molecules. According to the specs, it should read at ninety four hundred."

"Pavel?" Sulu asked.

Chekov took the tricorder from Yamato. He studied the scan for a minute. "He's right. It is only reading nine thousand parts per million. It appears the turbines are losing lanthanum."

"How?" Sulu asked.

"I don't know." Chekov said. "I've never seen anything like this. Scotty will want to see this. So will Mr. Spock."

"What is the status of the detail, Yamato?" Sulu asked.

"I'd say another fifteen or twenty minutes and we'll be ready to start putting it back together, Sir." Yamato said.

"Don't put it back together." Sulu said. "At least not yet. Chekov and I are going to report this. I'm leaving you in command of the detail."

"Aye Sir."

Commander Sulu walked across the room to a duty station against the wall by the door. He opened the senior officer's comline. "Sulu to Mr. Scott."

"Scotty here."

"We got some turbine pieces losing lanthanum, Scotty." Sulu said.

"What?"

"That was pretty much our reaction." Sulu said. "Chekov thinks Mr. Spock would be interested in this development."

"Meet me in my office." Scotty said. "I'll call Spock."

"We're on our way."

"Big command." Chekov rolled his eyes as he nodded over his shoulder to Yamato just as they left the pump room.

"Everyone has to start somewhere." Sulu shrugged.

Once the two senior officers had left, the ensigns breathed a collective sigh of relief. Paul Deitz released the antigrav from the panel he had just moved. "I'm glad they are gone. I could use a break."

"Let's just finish up the cleaning." Yamato suggested. "Then we can all sit down and relax."

"Yeah." Ethan Silverberg agreed. "If Sulu comes back and we're not done, we'll be on this detail for the rest of our lives."

"I hear you." Deitz nodded.

Chekov and Sulu walked into Scotty's office. He already had the specs for the fuel pump displayed on his large wall mounted screen. The graphics showed a cut away of a working pump. Chekov immediately handed Scotty the tricorder so he could download the readings to his computer.

"Have you ever seen anything like it before, Scotty?" Chekov asked.

"No." Scotty shook his head and manipulated the figures on his desk top view screen. "But this seems to be what has been bleeding into the deuterium."

"Could it be a failure in the manufacturer's bonding process?" Chekov asked as Spock walked into the office. He studied Scott's view screen.

"When was the last full maintenance procedure on this pump?" Spock asked.

"Eight months." Scott said.

"Was the turbine replaced at that time?" Spock asked.

Scotty brought up the maintenance log. "Part of it. Damage due to Klingon disruptor fire."

"Verteron levels?" Spock asked.

"We only did a molecular scan, Mr. Spock." Sulu said. "Nothing subatomic."

"Do you have the spare parts necessary to change out the defective pieces, Mr. Scott?" Spock asked.

"Aye." Scotty nodded. "And I'll have my crew check each replacement piece before it is installed."

"Good. Send the defective pieces to the lab for detailed analysis." Spock nodded to Scott. "I would like a subatomic scan of the pump surfaces before the defective parts are removed."

"That's it." Ensign Nigel Khanna said wiping his hands with a rag. The rest of the ensigns had already climbed out of the pit. The pieces of the pump were scattered around in the pit. Khanna climbed the ladder and sat on the deck with his legs dangling over the ladder.

"Now what?" Ensign Jose Cubano asked.

"We wait." Yamato said. "I'm sure Mr. Sulu and Mr. Chekov will return soon."

"I'm sure." Deitz added. "They are probably thinking up some new and dirtier detail for us."

"You think there is a dirtier detail?" Cubano laughed.

"Use your brain, Deitz." Silverberg said. "Sulu and Chekov are on this detail for the same reason we are."

"How do you come to that?" Coleman asked. "They were the ones who roused us when we didn't report."

"Merrick reported on time." Silverberg said. "He told me they were very hungover. And that the Cafe owner, you know the one everyone called Boss, she sent them coffee with one of the bus boys."

"So?" Deitz asked.

"So how did she know they needed coffee?" Silverberg asked. "Or even that the two of them were there? Unless one of them was with her all night. I doubt Admiral Kirk discusses crew assignments with a bartender."

"Well I heard..." Cubano stopped in midsentence when the door opened. The ensigns jumped to their feet when they saw Spock, Sulu and Chekov. The senior officers stopped at the duty station and made a few adjustments to the controls. After a minute, Chekov and Sulu came over to the pump.

"Yamato." Chekov said and immediately climbed down the ladder. Yamato followed him. "Show me exactly where you got these readings."

Chekov and Yamato went into the partially dismantled pump. Sulu glanced at the ensigns still standing at attention. "At ease."

The ensigns relaxed slightly. After a few minutes, Spock walked over to the edge of the pit and said. "That is sufficient, Mr. Chekov."

Chekov and Yamato emerged from the pump. When Chekov came up the ladder, he and Spock returned to the duty station discussing the readings. Sulu turned to the ensigns. "We'll let the engineering crew take it from here, gentlemen. Dismissed."

After the ensigns left the fuel pump housing area, Sulu went to Admiral Kirk's quarters. At the Admiral's orders, Sulu had reported on the completion of each evening's detail. It wasn't standard procedure, but Kirk was making a point.

Kirk called permission to enter when Sulu pressed the chime. He was working at his desk. Sulu stopped just inside the door. Kirk looked up at him with surprise.

"Finished already, Sulu?"

"Mr. Scott requested a molecular scan of the interior of the fuel pump, Sir." Sulu said. "The results show a problem with some parts of the turbine mechanism. The engineering crew will change the defective parts and reassemble the pump."

"What kind of problem?" Kirk asked.

"The integrity of the metal was compromised." Sulu said. "It was causing some contamination of the deuterium. Mr. Spock is studying the defective parts."

"Sit down, Sulu." Kirk nodded to the chair across the desk from him. Sulu sat down and waited. After a moment, Kirk asked. "How are your six ensigns doing?"

"They aren't happy." Sulu said. "But they understand their mistake and are taking the consequences without much complaint."

"Recommendations." Kirk said.

"I recommend ending the extra duty." Sulu said simply.

"It couldn't be that you want your evenings free again?" Kirk asked.

"Yes Sir, I do." Sulu smiled. "And so does Chekov. But these six had good records at the Academy and I think they've learned their lesson. Most importantly I think they deserve some of the fun."

"Fun?" Kirk asked.

"New ensigns are notoriously over enthusiastic." Sulu said. Kirk nodded. It was sometimes a problem for command officers. "They are thrilled to be here and get excited the first time they do something that matters. These guys are missing that."

"I see your point." Kirk said. "All right. We'll put them back on regular duty. But have a talk with them, Sulu. I don't want to see any of their names on any discipline reports."

"Aye Sir."

"If there is nothing else." Kirk said. Sulu got up to go. "Goodnight, Sulu."

"Goodnight Admiral."

The next evening, Commander Sulu walked into briefing room five. The six ensigns stood and came to attention. Sulu stood in front of them.

"At ease." Sulu said. "Admiral Kirk has returned you to normal duty status. But he wants it made perfectly clear that he is not to see any one of your names on any kind of discipline report if you expect to have a career in Starfleet. Is there anyone who doesn't understand that?"

None of the ensigns dared to say a word. Sulu nodded. "Good. Dismissed."